The TRAIL of TECUMSEH

PAUL G. TOMLINSON

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THE TRAIL OF TECUMSEH

"Let me go," exclaimed Burch.

[PAGE 176]

GREAT INDIAN CHIEFS SERIES

THE TRAIL OF TECUMSEH

BY

PAUL G. TOMLINSON

AUTHOR OF

"THE TRAIL OF BLACK HAWK," "TO THE LAND OF THE CARIBOU," ETC.

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PREFACE

Tecumseh has long been recognized as one of the most romantic characters in American history. A Shawnee chieftain of boundless courage, devoted patriotism, and great tenacity of purpose, for many years he was a source of perplexity as well as of trouble on the frontier.

In his own day he was bitterly hated by the whites, who gave him slight credit for the possession of any humane qualities. A calmer study of his life, however, clearly reveals not only his great ability but also his loyal devotion to the cause of the redmen. He was ardent in his purpose to retain the lands which the tribes, as they believed, had inherited from their forefathers.

Although many stories have been written of the great chieftain's daring, nevertheless the interest in the work of Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet, is perennial. To the boys of the present generation the visit of the brothers to the Creek warriors in the South, their courage in defying General Harrison and his hardy soldiers, and even their final decision to

cast in their lot with the British in the War of 1812, thereby hoping to protect their own tribes, are as fascinating today as they were to our grandfathers.

In this story I have tried to be true to the times in which the events incorporated in this tale took place. I have made free use of the various histories and records and am hopeful that my young readers will be interested not only in the story itself but in the chapter in American history which underlies it all.

PAUL G. TOMLINSON.

Elizabeth, New Jersey.

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THE TRAIL OF TECUMSEH

THE TRAIL OF TECUMSEH

PREFACE

LEADING EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF TECUMSEH

1768. The great chieftain was born in the Shawnee village of Piqua on the Mad River in what is now Ohio. This little Indian village was located about six miles from the present city of Springfield in that State. Tecumseh was one of three brothers born at the same time. Another of the three also became a great man. He was commonly known in his day as the Prophet and had great influence among the tribes. The name Tecumseh in the Indian language means "One who Leaps Swiftly From Place to Place." Because of that fact his name commonly has been taken to mean either "A Crouching Panther," or "A Shooting Star." His father also was a chief, prominent in his day, and the influence of his surroundings doubtless did much to develop the warlike spirit of the little Indian boy who was destined to become one of the famous characters in American history.

1792. While he was still a young man Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet, became active in the border wars. The first record we have of his hostilities against the whites is an attack which he

and a few warriors made upon a family named Waggoner. The ambitious young warrior instructed his companions to capture the other members of the family while he himself took Mr. Waggoner. The young brave failed in his attempt to secure the white man, but the other members of the family were all taken and several of them in the excitement were killed.

Tecumseh denied the right of the United States Government to buy lands from any single Indian tribe. He objected on the ground that the land belonged to all the tribes in common, particularly the lands in the Ohio Valley. When the Government refused to accept this principle Tecumseh began to organize the tribes to resist the incoming white men.

1809. General William Henry Harrison, acting for the United States, purchased land from the Miamis, Delawares and Pottawattomies. Tecumseh boldly disputed the General's right and soon there were serious threats of trouble between the red men and the white. General Harrison sent for the angry chieftain and there followed an argument logical, strong and forceful by each of them. Tecumseh, as has been said, claimed that the whites had no right to purchase land from one tribe when the land belonged to many tribes. General Harrison, however, disputed this claim, showing that the Indian tribes had various and different homes, spoke different languages, made treaties with one another and lived separate and distinct lives. He based his argument upon these facts to prove that if any

tribe was willing to dispose of its possessions, it had a perfect right to do so. Tecumseh, however, was still unconvinced and in great anger departed from the conference. The following day, however, he returned and apologized although he still declared that his convictions were unchanged. There was an agreement made, that if war broke out, Tecumseh would do his utmost to restrain the Indians from cruelties. When General Harrison inquired if Tecumseh would try to prevent the survey of the lands he had purchased, Tecumseh quietly replied that he was still of the same mind. Indeed, his determination was made clear when he said quietly, "I will not give in until I have united the red men."

1811. While Tecumseh was organizing the tribes from Florida to the headwaters of the Missouri River he and his brother, the Prophet, or their representatives, visited all this vast region, urging their fellow tribesmen to join the great confederacy. In this way alone he declared could the white men be prevented from seizing the land which for generations had belonged to the Indian tribes.

His plans, however, were abruptly halted by the battle of Tippecanoe. This fight was brought on by his brother, the Prophet, who was doing his utmost to arouse the warriors that had assembled at the confluence of the little Tippecanoe River with the Wabash. Throughout the battle that followed, the Prophet did not enter into the conflict. Going to a quiet little eminence not far away he busied himself in his incantations and prayers. The events

soon showed that he had made a great mistake in venturing to fight General Harrison's little army of eight hundred men. Tecumseh, the warrior, was not there and there was no leader to take his place. The Miamis openly opposed the battle, but the Shawnees, Wyandots, Chippewas, Delawares, Pottawattomies and other tribes favored it and with the result that the red men could not be restrained. Although sixty-two Americans were killed and one hundred and twenty-six were wounded in the battle the Indians were defeated and scattered.

1812. For a brief time it seemed that the Indians had been conquered and were willing to enter into a treaty. The War of 1812, however, suddenly broke out and Tecumseh, convinced that the occasion was one that ought not to be lost, soon led his army of two thousand warriors to the help of the British. Indeed, from them he received a regular commission as brigadier-general. With all his soul Tecumseh threw himself into the warfare and took an active part in the battles at Frenchtown, River Rasin, Ft. Meigs and Ft. Stephenson. When Commodore Perry won his great victory on Lake Erie it was Tecumseh and his warriors who covered the retreat of the British troops as they were driven farther into Canada.

1813. At last Tecumseh refused to retreat farther. His decision compelled Proctor, the British commander, to make a stand on the bank of the Thames River in Canada near the present city of Chatham, Ontario. A bloody and fierce battle followed. The British and Indians, however, were defeated by

General Harrison and many were killed or captured. Tecumseh entered the fight with a conviction that he would lose his life in the struggle. So firm was he in this opinion that he discarded the uniform of a brigadier-general which he had been wearing, and fought clad in deerskin, like the other Indians. It was October 5th when the great chieftain fell in front of his warriors. He had received a bullet in his arm, but still continued to lead his men. Another bullet in his head laid him low. The career of the Shawnee chieftain was ended before he was forty-five years of age.

It is not a source of pride to learn that the American soldiers in their anger at the leader of their enemies mutilated the body of the fallen warrior. They even cut away pieces of his skin which they took home with them as mementoes of the struggle. The historian, Trumbell, says that Tecumseh was the most extraordinary Indian character in the history of the United States. It is a pity that there is no reliable portrait of the great Indian. His name and deeds, however, will be known as long as the story of the hardy pioneers is told.

LEADING EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON

1773. Born at Berkeley, Virginia, February 9th. His father had been one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and also had been Governor of Virginia.

1792. When young Harrison was nineteen years of age he found that he must depend entirely upon himself for his support. His father was dead and there was no one to whom he could look for help. He became an ensign in the army on the frontier, first under General St. Clair and then under General Anthony Wayne, who was commonly known as Mad Anthony. There were many stirring adventures and experiences in the years in which he was engaged in fighting the western Indians.

1795. Promoted to be a captain in the army. He had become a favorite of Mad Anthony and the influence of that daring leader was most helpful when Harrison was placed in command of Fort Washington, located where now the city of Cincinnati, Ohio, stands.

1797. He resigned his commission in the army to become Governor of the territory, northwest of the Ohio.

1799. Chosen delegate to Congress.

1801. The new territory in the northwest having

been divided, Harrison, now twenty-eight years old, was appointed Governor of Indiana. The territory, however, included not only that which now is known by the name of Indiana but also Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. Very few white people were living in the region and the Indians were becoming increasingly hostile.

1811. Defeated the warriors of Tecumseh at the Battle of Tippecanoe.

1812. After the surrender of Detroit by General Hull in the War of 1812, Harrison was placed in command of the Army of the Northwest. His position was that of brigadier-general. The feeling toward General Hull, for what was believed to be his cowardly surrender of Detroit, found expression in an old song,—

"Let William Hull be counted null,
A coward and a traitor,
For British gold his army sold,
To Brock, the speculator."

1813. Harrison's subordinate officers were inefficient. Many had received their appointments through political influence instead of through their own ability or experience. Consequently, it was not until 1813, after General Harrison had been made a major-general, that his work began to count. Commodore Perry's victory on Lake Erie enabled Harrison to lead his army against the British and recover much of the territory that previously had been surrendered by the Americans. It was not

long after Harrison's success that he, like many other men of his day, found it impossible to work with Armstrong, at that time Secretary of War. General Harrison after a very decided difference of opinion with the Secretary abruptly resigned his position.

1816. Elected to Congress from Cincinnati. He served three years.

1819. Elected to the State Senate of Ohio where he served two years.

1824. Elected to the Senate of the United States.

1828. John Quincy Adams appointed General Harrison to be Minister Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Colombia. His service was brief, however, as he was speedily recalled after the election of Andrew Jackson as President. A few years of quiet followed, which General Harrison spent on his farm at North Bend on the Ohio, not far from Cincinnati. He was not possessed of wealth and soon accepted the office of clerk of the county court, which contributed somewhat to his support. He continued to hold this office, in connection with his life on the farm, twelve years.

1836. Nominated for President of the United States. He was exceedingly popular in the West. His honesty, earnestness and the fact that he was thoroughly reliable had made him many friends among the settlers. In the election which followed he received seventy-three electoral votes, but was defeated by Martin Van Buren, who became President of the United States.

1840. Great financial troubles had arisen in Van

Buren's administration and the people who were opposed to him were confident they then had their opportunity to elect some one in his place. The names of General Scott, Henry Clay and others were proposed, but at last William Henry Harrison received the nomination. The campaign that followed was the most exciting which the country had ever seen. For the first time there were mass meetings, parades, torch light processions, etc. Some of his enemies had taunted Harrison for having lived in a log cabin and his only drink being hard cider. The "log cabin" became one of the rallying cries of the campaign. John Tyler was the candidate for vice-president and a popular slogan throughout the country became "Tippecanoe and Tyler too." General Harrison was completely successful, receiving two hundred and thirty-four electoral votes to sixty for Van Buren.

1841. Inaugurated as President March 4th. Great expectations had been aroused by his election and the hopes of the people were high. Within a month after his inauguration, however, President Harrison was taken ill and at the expiration of eight days he died. Tyler then became President in his place.

William Henry Harrison was the grandfather of General Benjamin Harrison who was elected President of the United States in 1888.

CHAPTER I

A STORY

"TELL me about Tecumseh."

"Ha, ha," laughed the trapper. "If I told you all I knew about him you'd have to sit up all night listening."

George Hollister was seated in the log cabin of his friend Alec Smith, the trapper, and like all people on the frontier in the days just preceding the War of 1812 was interested in the famous Indian chieftain.

George had only recently celebrated his eighteenth birthday, but he was almost a man in size and strength. The active outdoor life of a pioneer had made his muscles supple and strong; his chest was full and deep, and his clear eyes showed that he enjoyed perfect health. He had lived on the frontier but a short time, having moved there from his home in Virginia. Typhoid fever had robbed him of both father and mother a few months pre-

vious to the opening of this story, and being an only child he had been left alone in the world.

Nothing daunted, however, George struck out for himself and with a healthy boy's love of adventure had turned his footsteps westward. After many hardships and perils he had finally come to that part of our country which is now included in the state of Indiana.

In those early days Indiana seemed far west. Here he had become acquainted and had formed a warm friendship with Alec Smith, a man who made his living by hunting and fishing. He was double George's age but they got on splendidly together nevertheless and now were partners.

"Yes," laughed Alec, "it would take all night for me to tell you all I know about Tecumseh."

"I don't care," insisted George. "I want to hear something about the Indian who is making all this trouble along the border."

"Well, I hope he doesn't pay us a personal visit," said Alec more seriously. "I've seen him, but I don't care to see him again unless I have a bodyguard with me."

"Is he so bloodthirsty?"

"Indeed he is, and he loves red scalps too." Alec's eyes twinkled as he glanced at the flam-

ing red hair that adorned his young companion's head.

"Because your hair is black and curly I suppose you're safe," retorted George. The two friends loved to banter each other.

"Well, I'm not so sure of that," said Alec. "At any rate I hope I may be able to keep out of his way."

"You haven't told me about him yet," George reminded his friend.

"That's true. You know I saw him just about a year ago."

"Is that so? Where was that?"

"At Vincennes. Just a year ago this month it was; August 12, 1810, was the exact date as I recall it."

"Go on," urged George eagerly. "You've got to tell me, you know."

"Well, it was like this," Alec began. "Along about September, 1809, there was a treaty made at Fort Wayne between the Delawares, Miamis and Pottawattomies and General Harrison, who represented the United States as commissioner. By this treaty the Indians gave to the government a tract of land extending along the Wabash River above Vincennes. Now this was all done

without the knowledge of Tecumseh and when he heard of it he was furiously angry."

"But," protested George, "what did Tecumseh have to do with it anyway?"

"Nothing at all," said Alec. "The Miamis had owned the land for a longer time than any one could remember and the whole transaction was legal in every way. The chiefs of the other tribes attended the council and all agreed to the provisions of the treaty. At any rate Tecumseh didn't belong to any of the tribes concerned. He is a Shawnee."

"Where was he while the treaty was being arranged?"

"He was off trying to stir up some other tribes against the Americans, that's where he was. When he returned and found out what had been done he was furious. He threatened to kill all the chiefs who had signed the treaty and he boasted that he would never allow the United States to survey or occupy the land in question."

"He had nerve all right, didn't he?" exclaimed George, who was much impressed by the red man's brave attitude. "How old a man is he now, anyway?"

"Let's see," mused Alec. "He was born in 1768 and this is 1811; that would make him about forty-three, wouldn't it?"

"Was he born around this part of the country?"

"No. Over in Ohio on the Mad River, I believe. He was one of three brothers all born at the same time. Did you ever hear of his brother, the Prophet?"

George acknowledged that he never had.

"Well," said Alec. "I'll tell you about him sometime too, but now I'll go on with my story if you still want to hear it."

"Of course I want to hear it."

"Well, Tecumseh was mad when he heard what had happened and made a lot of threats, just as I told you. General Harrison heard of it and at once invited him to come down to Vincennes and talk things over. General Harrison told him that if he had any good claims to the land they would be allowed, and that at any rate he had better come down and state his case. I happened to be at Vincennes at that time with a load of skins and so I saw the whole proceeding. I shall never forget it either."

"Did Tecumseh come alone?"

"He did not. He had several hundred warriors with him and they certainly made a great sight as they all sat around on the grass."

"There were soldiers there too, weren't there?" asked George.

"Oh, yes. All in all it was quite a large gathering. Well, after the usual formalities Tecumseh got up to speak."

"What does he look like?" demanded George. "I suppose he was all painted up, wasn't he?"

"Not at all. I guess Tecumseh doesn't care much about all the gaudy things that most Indians like. He was just dressed in simple deerskin, but he looked like a chief all right. He's a little fatter than most Indians, but I imagine he gets around about as fast as any of 'em. He stands up very straight, and his face is stern, and his eyes just look you through and through. They say he's usually pretty quiet but he's a great speechmaker when he gets started; any one will tell you that. He's smart too; the fact that the United States always sends her best man to treat with him proves that."

"What did he speak about that day?"

"Well, he got up and started a long harangue about the Great Spirit having made the Western

World for the use of the Indians, and the Indians only. He said the white man had no right to come there and take their land away from them; furthermore he said that all the land was owned in common by every tribe and that no tribe had any right to sell any land unless all the others also gave their consent."

"That was a queer statement to make," remarked George.

"Wasn't it? Everyone knows that the different tribes all hate one another and they fight every chance they get. As though you could ever get the consent of all!" And Alec snorted at the very idea of anything so absurd.

"Still it's hard to blame the Indians for not wanting to give up their lands," said George. "We'd probably feel the same way."

"But this was a straight sale," protested Alec. "No one was trying to steal the land or rob them of it; they didn't have to sell unless they wanted to."

"What did General Harrison say to Tecumseh's speech?"

"Well, he said something pretty good all right. He said that what Tecumseh had claimed was all wrong; he said that the Indians

were just like the white people and were divided into different tribes and nations; he said the Great Spirit never intended the Indians should all have the same interest and the fact that they spoke so many different languages proved that; he said that at any rate Tecumseh could have no claim to the land in question because he was a Shawnee and that tribe had originally come from Georgia, while the land sold on the Wabash had been in the possession of the Miamis beyond the memory of any man living."

"What did Tecumseh think of that?" exclaimed George.

"Well, say," said Alec, "you just ought to have been there to see what he thought." The trapper became greatly excited at the memory of what had taken place; he rested the butt end of the rifle, which he had been cleaning, on the floor between his legs while he grasped the barrel in both hands and leaned forward eagerly. Night had fallen outside and the plaintive call of a hoot owl sounded across the tiny clearing. They were in the heart of the wilderness.

A moment later Alec continued. "General

Harrison had hardly finished talking when Tecumseh jumped to his feet. 'It is all false!' he shouted, and then he gave a signal and every Indian there jumped up off the ground, his tomahawk or his war club in his hand. General Harrison sprang up from his seat and drew his sword. I can tell you things looked pretty black.''

''Didn't General Harrison have any armed attendants?''

''His personal attendants weren't armed and the only guard he had was a sergeant and twelve men. Well, both parties stood and glared at each other for a while, but General Harrison never flinched and the Indians got sort of scared. Finally the general broke the silence and told Tecumseh that he was a bad man, that he wanted nothing more to do with him, and that he must leave the camp at once.''

''Did he go?'' demanded George deeply interested in his friend's tale.

''He certainly did.''

''And no fight took place?''

''Well that night all the militia in the neighborhood was ordered into the town, for every one thought surely the Indians would attack the

place, but they didn't. The next day there was another conference and Tecumseh sort of half apologized for his actions. He said he didn't want to go to war with the United States but he was determined to defend the old boundary, and there the matter ended. He said he would rather fight with the United States than with the British but unless the Americans would promise to give up the land he would join the English against them."

"What has he been doing since then?" asked George.

"Going around the country stirring up all the tribes as far as I can see," said Alec, "and now they've started in on their border raids."

As he finished speaking the call of an owl was again wafted across the clearing. This time, however, it seemed to come from a different direction than when it had been heard before. Alec half raised his rifle and cocking his head slightly to one side listened intently. "That's queer," he muttered.

"What's queer?" demanded George, puzzled by his companion's behavior.

Alec made no answer.

CHAPTER II

THE HOOT OF AN OWL

FOR some moments there was absolute silence in the little dwelling. The trapper sat still, as if suddenly changed into stone. His great muscular hands gripped his rifle tightly, while his young companion did not once remove his gaze from his friend's face.

Alec's coat was off, his coarse shirt was unbuttoned at the neck, and George could not help admiring the man's great strength so apparent to any one who saw him thus. Muscles rippled across his chest and shoulders and as George noted the powerful hands and forearms of his friend he shuddered involuntarily to think what might happen to any one who should come within his grasp.

Outside a cricket chirped and the wind rustled the leaves of a great tree that stood beside the door. The flickering blaze of a pine knot lighted up the tiny room with a ghostly flare and

did little to relieve the tension that pervaded the air. George could feel his heart pounding in his breast and he almost held his breath as he gazed fixedly at his companion. Alec was alarmed, but why? He had heard the hoot of an owl but surely that was not a sound to alarm a woodsman.

George knew however that Alec was not a man to look for trouble and consequently he remained quiet and awaited developments. What seemed like hours passed and George was beginning to think that after all his comrade had been deceived. Then he thought of Tecumseh and remembered that they had just been talking about the red chief's border raids. He shivered at the thought and then dismissed the idea as silly. Why should any Indian wish to attack two peaceful trappers?

His mind kept returning again and again to the Indians, however, and try as he might he could not dismiss them from his mind. A branch blew against the side of the cabin and at the noise George almost cried out. It seemed to him he could endure the strain no longer. Still Alec sat motionless, apparently not having moved a muscle of his face or body.

"Say, Al—" began George in a low voice when he was suddenly interrupted. Once again the call of a hoot owl came to his ears.

Instantly Alec was all action. Springing hastily to his feet he locked and double-barred the door; then he turned to the tiny window that furnished light during the day, and hung a blanket over it so that no one from the outside could peer within.

"What's wrong, Alec?" demanded George excitedly. He had instantly seized his rifle, however, and with a hasty glance satisfied himself that the priming was all right.

"Indians," said Alec briefly.

"How do you know?"

"Didn't you hear that call?"

"I heard an owl."

"That was no owl. That was an Indian."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive. Don't pass in front of where that window is, either."

George moved over to the place where Alec was standing by the door and at the same time was out of line with the window. They both crouched low and listened intently. The silence became almost appressive.

"Is it safe to stand by the door?" whispered George doubtfully.

"Their bullets will never penetrate this door," said Alec. "The red fiends!" he added under his breath.

"Do you think they'll attack us?"

"Can't tell. We've got to be ready anyhow."

The minutes dragged along and nothing happened to disturb the apparent peace and quiet of the night. George began to think that perhaps Alec had been deceived after all. He was on the point of voicing his opinion to his friend when there was a sudden crash. A bullet winging its way through the window, tore a hole in the blanket and knocked a tin pail from the table. It fell to the floor with a clatter.

"Look out!" warned Alec. "Duck lower!"

George needed no second urging and was instantly flattened out on the floor, as close up against the wall as he could squeeze.

"Who said that was an owl?" inquired Alec grimly.

"I did," said George, "but I take it back."

"Lucky this cabin was built the way it was," said Alec. "Come here and I'll show you something."

George wormed himself along on his stomach until he reached a spot close to his friend.

"See that spot?" whispered Alec. "That's a porthole and all I have to do is give it a pull and it will open right up. The wood is double thickness, three feet high around the sides so that no bullets can go through."

"Suppose they sneak up and set fire to us."

"Depends on how many there are of them. If there are only a few and they think we are ready for them they may not dare come close."

At that instant, however, a second bullet following the course of the other one through the window struck the blazing pine knot squarely. It was splintered and sent hurtling into the far corner of the room where it spluttered weakly for a moment and went out. The cabin was left in complete darkness.

"That's a nice state of affairs," muttered Alec disgustedly.

"Want me to light another?" asked George quickly.

"No. Stay where you are. I'm going to open this porthole."

Carefully he swung back the little door and peered out. George could not see him, for the

room was inky dark, but he knew instinctively what was taking place and he could hear the slight grating noise as the porthole was opened.

"I can just see the moon coming up over the trees," announced Alec after one cautious look around.

"That'll help us," said George. "We'll be able to see something."

"I hope so," muttered the trapper. "Here," he added, "you come and station yourself at this porthole and without taking any unnecessary chance see if you can't keep watch of what is going on outside there."

"Where are you going?"

"There's more of these portholes in the cabin. I'm going over to the other side of the room and open up another. I know where they are so you stay there. Keep a sharp lookout."

"I'll do that all right."

"And have your gun ready. If you see any of them red prowlers send 'em one of your lead pills."

George promised to follow instructions and Alec crawled off, groping his way along in the darkness. Left alone George felt for the opening and finding it, peered out cautiously.

Grasped tightly in his right hand he held his rifle.

At first he saw nothing. The moon, now risen above the tops of the trees, suffused the clearing with its light and as George's eyes became adjusted he began to recognize various objects. Against the sky the forest trees were outlined, and, as time passed, the stumps and rocks in the clearing could be distinguished. Meanwhile the moon rose higher and higher and George's ability to see increased in proportion.

His gaze wandered over the ground as far in both directions as the limited space of the porthole would permit, but he saw nothing to arouse his suspicions. He remembered Alec's warning, however, and never for a moment relaxed his vigilance. His position on the floor was cramped and uncomfortable, however, so that he was not enjoying himself very much.

He quickly forgot all his discomforts when the hoot of an owl again sounded across the clearing. This time it seemed to come from a spot directly in front of him, but how far distant he was unable to determine. Suddenly the call was answered, apparently from some place on the opposite side of the clearing.

"Hear that?" hissed Alec from across the room. "Watch sharp."

From behind a stump near the border of the clearing George saw a figure suddenly spring up and run swiftly forward. The young pioneer hastily raised his rifle and thrust it through the porthole but before he could aim the Indian threw himself down behind another stump, nearer the cabin.

"I saw one of them," exclaimed George in a low voice, not turning his head around however. "I had no chance to shoot, though."

"I saw one too," said Alec. "He sneaked from one stump to another."

"Same as mine did."

"Well, just keep the stump where he is now well covered," said Alec. "We'll get 'em next time they stick their heads out."

The minutes passed and then the call of an owl suddenly sounded again. Again it was echoed on the opposite side of the clearing.

"Look out!" warned Alec.

George held his gun ready for instant action. His finger was on the trigger and he carefully sighted the stump from behind which he expected to see the Indian spring. None appeared

as he had expected however. Instead he saw with the tail of his eye another savage drop from sight behind a stump near the one he had been watching.

"He fooled me," he exclaimed.

"I got fooled too," said Alec angrily. "There's two over here."

"What shall we do?"

"Keep an aim on the first stump I say. I don't believe there's more than four of them. If there were they'd have been up a good deal closer than they are by this time."

"Do you suppose they'll signal again?"

"You can't tell what they'll do. Don't count on it."

During this conversation neither one of the two friends had once turned his head or relaxed his caution. The Indians evidently had adopted their present method of advance, two at a time and from opposite directions, so that the chances of one reaching the destination were that much increased.

George gazed fixedly at the stump, and when he had just begun to think that the Indian had moved without his knowledge or that he had been deceived in the first place, what he had been

expecting to see took place. The Indian suddenly appeared from behind the stump and keeping low to the ground darted forward.

Instantly taking aim, George fired.

CHAPTER III

FLIGHT

THERE was practically no breeze and the smoke from George's gun hung low, and for a moment obscured his vision so that he was unable to see whether or not his shot had taken effect.

At that moment, however, there came a quick puff of smoke from behind the stump where the second Indian was hidden. Again a bullet tore through the blanket that covered the window and flattened itself against the opposite wall. Then Alec's rifle spoke.

Peering out into the moonlight George was unable to see a sign of any Indian. If his bullet had gone true and had found its mark it was possible that the savage might have fallen in a patch of long grass and thus have been obscured from view. The young pioneer was an expert marksman and it was not conceit that made him think it most unlikely that he had missed.

"I got my man," announced Alec briefly. "I saw him fall."

Both woodsmen had instantly reloaded their rifles and now were ready for more developments.

"You fired," said Alec. "What luck did you have?"

"I don't know. I couldn't see whether I hit him or not."

"I guess you did, all right," said Alec confidently. "That makes only two left."

"We're not sure of that."

"Pretty sure though. I wonder what they'll do next."

By way of answer George's gun spoke. He had suddenly spied a crouching form making for the edge of the clearing. With the report the Indian broke into a run, and as George's bullet went wild he saw his foe gain the shelter of the trees before he could reload.

"One of them just sneaked off into the woods," he exclaimed excitedly.

"That's bad," muttered Alec, still gazing earnestly out of his porthole.

"Why so?"

"It means he has gone for help."

"You think so?"

"I know so. They don't dare come any nearer when there are only two of them but they're probably mad now and determined to get us."

"What shall we do about it?" demanded George. "If they can bring help before we get away it will be all over with us."

"That's just it; we must get away."

"Go now you mean?"

"The sooner the better. You light one of the candles and we'll get a few things together that we'll need."

After much fumbling around in the darkness, George finally succeeded in striking a light. With the aid of its feeble blaze the two companions prepared themselves for flight as speedily as possible.

"We won't take much," said Alec. "We'll travel light and fast."

"Where are we going?"

"To Vincennes, if they don't get us first."

"That's pretty far."

"I know it, but it's the only place for us. We'll strike straight from here for the Wabash River; I know where there's a canoe we can

take and we'll paddle the rest of the way."

"Do you suppose these raids are going on all along the border?" George inquired.

"No doubt of it, and it's time they were stopped. I'm going to go right to Governor Harrison as quick as we get to Vincennes and make a complaint."

As large a supply of powder and shot as possible was taken by each and then the matter of food was looked after. Dried meat and corn were the principal articles and soon the fugitives were ready to start.

"We'd better take a look around before we go out," suggested Alec.

"Yes," agreed George and started for the window.

"Where you going?" demanded Alec sharply.

"I'm going to lift the blanket and take a look out of the window."

"Well, you're not going to do anything of the kind," exclaimed Alec. "You keep away from that window. Do you want to commit suicide?"

"No, I don't," said George meekly. "That's the best place to see out, though."

"Best place to get shot you mean. We'll do

all our seeing out of the portholes; they'll have to do us."

"Wouldn't it be better if we waited for the moon to set before we started?" suggested George.

"It would," Alec admitted. "It would be much better, but by that time there may be a whole pack of them red devils at our throats."

"But the Indian left behind out here will see us in the moonlight," George protested.

"He'll see us, moon or no moon. Come on, we'll go now."

Rifles in hand and packs slung across their shoulders the two pioneers approached the door. They had taken a hasty glance around the clearing, but seeing nothing had decided to start.

"Blow out that candle," whispered Alec.

George did as he was told and then rejoined his comrade who stood by the door, his great brawny hands on the bolt. George touched his arm in the darkness. "All right," he said.

Noiselessly Alec drew back the bolts; then grasping the handle of the door gradually, and with infinite care, opened it. Nothing hap-

pened to disturb the apparent peacefulness of the night, and no trace of any human being was to be seen.

The gnarled stumps standing in the clearing were given weird and fantastic shapes by the moonlight, and to George's young and excited brain more than one of them had the exact appearance of an Indian. He saw Indians dart from behind trees and spring up suddenly from clumps of grass and in fact his brain was so filled with thoughts of Indians that he saw them on every hand. He stuck close by Alec's side as they made off across the clearing.

No word was spoken as they hurried along. They kept as low as possible to the ground and zigzagged in their course as much as they were able. In their path was a large oak tree and as they passed beneath its overhanging limbs a sound came to their ears that made their very blood run cold. From a spot apparently in the depths of the foliage above their heads came the hoot of an owl.

Both Alec and George stopped still in their tracks and each one automatically swung his rifle to his shoulder. It seemed queer that one of their foes should be in the tree and that he

should so boldly disclose his hiding place. Yet they had both heard the call.

At that instant a bullet whined through the air above them and cut its way through the leaves of the old oak. Close on its heels came the report of a rifle from the other side of the clearing.

"Duck!" hissed Alec quickly, and both fugitives quickly dropped to one knee, and were at a loss which way to look. That they were caught in a trap was the first thing to occur to each of them. Hardly had the bullet passed through the leaves, however, when an amazing thing happened. From the air above came the sound of wings and out of the tree flew a hoot owl.

"Say," exclaimed Alec in an awed voice. "It was a real one."

Without another word they turned and hurried on. A moment more and they reached the edge of the forest where it ran down to meet the clearing. Here they paused to decide on the next move.

"That blamed owl fooled me," grumbled Alec.

"Maybe that was the one we heard all the time."

"No, it wasn't either. I know those first ones were fakes."

"We'd better keep going," suggested George, looking back nervously in the direction whence the shot had come.

"Well, we're going all right," said Alec. "Follow me."

He skirted the edge of the clearing for a short distance, then struck straight into the forest. Then he doubled back on his tracks for a considerable distance and then once again turned straight into the woods. This time he kept on going.

Noiselessly and swiftly the two woodsmen traveled. They said nothing, but their eyes wandered ceaselessly in all directions, searching the gloom of the woods for any sign of the enemy. Creepers and various kinds of vines thrust out their clutching hands to trip the unwary. Fallen trees barred their path, made doubly difficult by the darkness. As every one knows there are few places blacker than the interior of a forest at night.

Close behind his companion George remained. Experienced as he was in woodcraft he found it no easy task to keep pace with the sturdy

trapper. Alec seemed tireless and possessed of an almost uncanny power to see at night. He glided swiftly along the forest aisles, skirting all obstructions and keeping steadily on his course. George had to use all his wits and all his skill to keep up the pace. It seemed to him that they had covered many miles and he was well-nigh exhausted when Alec finally called a halt.

He stopped and touching George on the arm pointed ahead. Through the trees a dim light was visible.

"What is it?" whispered George.

"The Wabash River," said Alec. "The moon is shining on it."

"Where's the canoe?"

"Come along and I'll show you."

They crept forward cautiously until they had reached the river bank. They stood in the midst of a little cluster of bushes and looked out over the water which shone and sparkled in the light of the setting moon. A small inlet lay at their feet. Suddenly Alec seized his young companion violently by the wrist and drew him down into the clump of bushes in the center of which they were standing.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE RIVER

CROUCHED low in the shelter of the leaves the two fugitives peered out across the river. Alec had spoken no word and George was at a loss to explain his comrade's action; at the same time he knew better than to ask questions and had acted quickly and silently. To hesitate might have caused his death, and Alec's as well, for all he knew.

All at once he discovered the reason for his companion's alarm. Clearly outlined in the moonlight and suddenly appearing from around a bend in the river he spied a canoe. In it were four Indians, every one of them wielding a paddle. The blades made no sound whatsoever as the paddlers dipped them deep into the water; the slight swish of the water against the prow was the only noise heard as the ghost-like craft slid swiftly along.

The sight was not one to inspire the two watchers with any particular feeling of security,

but at the same time they could not help admiring the masterly way the paddlers worked. In silent admiration and awe they watched the canoe disappear downstream.

"Whew!" whispered George. "That was a close call."

"Ssh!" hissed Alec.

A second canoe, manned like the first now hove into sight. Behind it came another and then another. The naked bodies of the redskins outlined against the moon made an awe-inspiring sight and one which neither Alec nor George enjoyed.

The last canoe disappeared around a bend but neither of the two woodsmen crouching among the bushes moved. For many minutes they sat in silence, peering out for signs of any more enemies. None appeared, however, and finally Alec spoke.

"Well, that makes it nice for us," he whispered.

"That's the direction we wanted to take, wasn't it?" George inquired.

"It was, and it still is."

"What shall we do about it?"

"Well I don't much like the idea of taking

the same route as them sixteen red devils."

"But where else can we go?"

"That's just it," grumbled Alec. "There's no place else we can go."

"Where do you suppose those Indians are bound?"

"Well, I wish I knew." Alec had a great habit of commencing many of his sayings with the word "Well."

"If I did know," he continued, "I should certainly see to it that we took a different route."

"I suppose that was a war party," suggested George.

"Well, if they'd seen us I guess you'd have found out soon enough that your supposing is correct," muttered Alec grimly. "Another one of them raiding parties, I guess. This business certainly must stop."

"We can't stay here all night," said George, already stiff and sore from his cramped position on the ground.

"We can stay here all night perhaps, but we can't stay here all day," corrected Alec. "As soon as it's light, them red fiends will be hot on our trail from the clearing."

"We doubled on our tracks," George reminded him.

"Well, suppose we did; that may delay 'em for a little while but not for long. They'll follow our trail like bloodhounds."

"Then I say that as soon as the moon goes down we'd better start," said George. "Can you find the way in the dark?"

"I can find it if no one interferes."

"Then I say we go. Where's the canoe?"

"Not fifty feet from here, but I thought you were going to wait for the moon to go down."

"That's true," said George, sinking back into his former position, from which he had half raised himself.

The big yellow moon sank lower and lower. Nearer and nearer it came to the tops of the trees until at length it sank below the rim and disappeared from view. The little waves lapped the shore and now and again a faint splash disclosed the fact that some fish had jumped. Otherwise silence reigned over the great wilderness.

"Come," urged Alec at length. "We'd better be moving."

He rose to his feet cautiously and peered furtively in all directions. George too lifted himself up and side by side the two pioneers stood for a few moments. Nothing occurred to arouse their suspicions, however, and presently they stole forward.

Leading the way Alec proceeded down to the shore and then followed the bank for a number of yards. He seemed to know his ground and walked confidently. Soon he came to a spot where a giant tree had been uprooted. It had stood close by the shore and in its fall had torn a great hole in the ground around its base. In the years that had followed vines and creepers had grown around the torn roots, forming a leafy roof for the cavity made by the tree.

Thrusting his arm down through the canopy of vines Alec felt the canoe. A moment later he had drawn out the light craft from its hiding place and launched it on the river.

"Hold on to this end a minute," he said to George. "I'll go and get the paddles."

He walked quickly to a hollow tree which stood a short distance away and presently returned with two paddles.

"All right," he said, "we're off now sure."

Each took his place in the canoe, deposited his rifle upon the bottom, and picked up a paddle. George seated himself in the bow and Alec worked from the stern. A moment later Alec pushed off from shore, and noiselessly they slid out into the stream.

"Take it easy," warned Alec in a low voice. "We don't want to run into any surprise party if we can help it."

The moon had now disappeared behind the trees and only the stars overhead remained to light them. The water appeared inky black and forbidding. All that George could see ahead of him was the dark stretch of water and the course of the river marked by the forest trees outlined against the sky. It was a grewsome experience to go along that way, not knowing what was lying in wait.

Mile after mile they covered in silence. At least they did not talk, but their paddles made a slight noise, for they were not the experts that the Indians were. They laid their course along the middle of the stream, thinking that by so doing they ran less risk of a sudden surprise attack from either bank. Apparently the whole

neighborhood was infested with marauding red men and they wished to avoid all hostile parties if possible.

After what seemed several hours to George a few faint streaks of light appeared in the sky. The rose colored fingers of dawn spread themselves over the heavens and the young woodsman heaved a sigh of relief. He had had enough of darkness and night, especially such a night as had just passed.

"Thank goodness, day is breaking," he exclaimed.

"And that makes it bad for us," said Alec in reply.

"Why so?"

"Because if we can see in the daytime, so can the Indians."

"You mean they'll attack us?"

"Well, what else could I mean?"

George relapsed into silence after this rebuff and made no further attempt at conversation. Meanwhile the light of the rising sun began to make objects recognizable along the river; rocks and bays and coves could be seen along the shore and a huge log floated along close by the canoe.

"We'll have to go ashore, I'm afraid," remarked Alec.

"What for?"

"Because I think it's dangerous to travel in broad daylight."

"The Indians wouldn't dare attack us when it's light," exclaimed George boldly.

"Well, I guess that's all you know about it," snorted Alec. "You don't think that sixteen Indians like those we saw last night would be afraid of two of us, do you?"

"They might," insisted George.

"Well, they might not too," sniffed Alec. "I say we go ashore."

"And stay there all day?"

"If we have to; you can't tell what might turn up."

"All right," agreed George. "You know more about it than I do, I'll do anything you think best."

"Well, the next cove we come to we'll go in," said Alec. "Keep watch for a good place."

"Perhaps there'll be a place around that bend," suggested George, pointing ahead to where there was a curve in the river.

"All right," said Alec, and with swift strong

strokes the two woodsmen urged the light craft along. The sun was now risen and the whole country looked fresh and green and inviting in the early morning light; it did not seem as if there could be enemies lurking nearby. George's spirits had risen with the return of day and he had regained his confidence. He somehow scoffed at Alec's fear of danger, but he knew his companion to be wise in the ways of the frontier and he did not argue the point.

A few minutes passed and they rounded the curve. Ahead of them on the right appeared a little bay and almost directly opposite it on the other bank was a second cove.

"There are two places," said George. "Which one shall we choose?"

"Well, I don't know," said Alec as he rested his paddle across his knees. George too had ceased work and the canoe drifted idly along, nearly between the two points in question. "That one over on the right looks pretty good from here."

George followed his companion's gaze and both looked interestedly at the spot on the right bank.

"I guess that's all right," he agreed. "Still that other one is not so bad." He turned and looked towards the other bank.

As his gaze fell upon the little harbor he saw something that made the chills run up and down his spine. A canoe, with four Indians in war paint on board, suddenly shot out from shore and started towards them.

"Alec!" cried George excitedly. "The Indians!"

Alec had seen them already, however, and he acted quickly.

"You paddle as you have never done before!" he ordered George. "We're going for that cove on the right hand bank."

"But—"

"Don't argue; paddle!" said Alec curtly.

George did paddle. He drove the blade deep into the water and exerted all his strength. Alec swung the bow around and headed for shore; the canoe sprang forward as if it were alive.

Neither one of the fugitives glanced back, but with set teeth and a determination born of grim necessity exerted himself to the utmost.

A bullet struck the water just in front of them and skipped merrily along over the tiny waves. The two fleeing woodsmen only exerted themselves the more. Another leaden ball of death sang over their heads while the noise of the rifles followed close behind.

"Are they gaining?" exclaimed George without looking around.

"I don't know. Paddle!"

Ahead of them, perhaps fifty yards away, was shore. Behind them were the Indians and now the war whoop rang out across the river.

This sound seemed to add strength to the determination of the two fugitives and desperately they plied their paddles. They were now entering the little cove which was their goal and just ahead of them showed the tiny beach for which they were headed. A moment more and they would be on shore and could seek the protection of the woods.

A bullet zipped past George's head, but no attention was paid to it. He and his companion were intent on reaching shore, not ten yards distant now. Suddenly there was a violent shock and both occupants of the canoe were

nearly thrown overboard. The little craft had run upon a submerged log and was stuck fast.

"Grab your rifle; hold it over your head and jump!" cried Alec.

CHAPTER V

A BRUSH WITH THE INDIANS

GEORGE did as he was told. He turned quickly and seizing his rifle from the bottom of the canoe tried to jump. The canoe after finally coming to a stop had slowly tipped to one side and George was thrown out instead of jumping as he had planned. The fact that Alec leaped at the same instant did not make his task any easier.

Luckily the water was only knee-deep, so that George was able to hold his rifle above his head and not wet the priming nor his precious store of powder. Staggering and stumbling he hurried ashore. Alec had preceded him and a moment later they both were kneeling behind a large fallen tree a short distance up the bank.

A yell of triumph from the pursuing canoe greeted their mishap and more eagerly than before the Indians urged their little craft forward. Now, however, both George and Alec

had the protection of the fallen tree and could use it as a rest for their rifles as well.

"Here goes one of those fiends to the happy hunting grounds," said Alec grimly, and taking deliberate aim he fired.

The foremost Indian in the canoe dropped his paddle and slid forward limply in his place.

A yell of rage, and bullets from two of the other Indians answered this event. Fully prepared for such action, however, the two riflemen behind the tree ducked their heads quickly. One bullet flattened itself against the improvised fort, while the other sang harmlessly over their heads. All this time Alec was hurrying desperately to reload his rifle.

"It's your chance now," he muttered. "Let 'em have it."

Lifting his head once more George took quick aim and fired. He saw one of the Indians in the middle of the canoe drop his gun and put his hand to his right shoulder.

"Hit him?" asked Alec.

"In the right shoulder."

"That'll keep him from doing any more shooting any way."

"They're going away," exclaimed George suddenly.

"Well, here's something to remember us by," said Alec and he sent another bullet speeding towards the fast retreating canoe. His aim was poor, however, and a splash some feet to one side showed where the ball had hit the water. "Missed," he muttered disconsolately.

Realizing that they were at a great disadvantage in the combat the Indians had decided that to withdraw was their best policy. The white men on shore had excellent cover while the canoe provided an easy mark, clearly outlined on the water.

"Let 'em go," exclaimed Alec as he watched the Indians moving rapidly farther and farther away. "We'd better go ourselves now."

"Go out on the river again?" exclaimed George in amazement.

"Go out on the river again, nothing!" said Alec. "You must think I'm crazy."

"What do you mean to do?"

"Strike across country, and we'd better get moving before those Indians collect some of their friends and start back after us."

"We've been up all night, you know."

"Are you tired?"

"Yes, some," admitted George. "Why shouldn't I be?"

"Are you too tired to go on?"

"That depends upon how necessary it is."

"Well, those fellows will be back after us soon enough."

"Why can't we sit right here and pick them off when they try to cross the river?"

"Because there's not one chance in a million that they'll ever try to cross here. They'll go up or downstream and sneak up on us from behind."

"If we could stay here all day we might go on down the river again tonight," suggested George.

"It's a long time before dark," said Alec. "If you're able to stand it I think we'd better start across country."

"How far is it to Vincennes?"

"It must be about fifteen miles," said Alec after a moment's thought. "I wish we had horses."

"So do I," sighed George. "We can eat a little something now though, can't we?"

"I guess we can," Alec agreed and they par-

took sparingly of their scanty supply of meat and corn.

"What about the canoe?" demanded George. "Are you going to go away and leave that here?"

"Well, I'd rather lose my canoe than my scalp," said Alec. "I guess we'll have to leave it where it is."

"You know the way to Vincennes?"

"I do."

"What's between here and there?"

"Oh, nothing but woods and prairies and bloodthirsty savages," said Alec. "Isn't that enough?"

"It's enough for me," said George soberly. "I hope we get through."

"That'll depend on how many Indians are around and how lucky we are. I hope we're lucky."

"Well, let's start," exclaimed George, quickly rising to his feet. "If I stay here much longer I'll go to sleep, Indians or no Indians."

"Come along," exclaimed Alec jumping up. He glanced keenly out over the river once and then turned and plunged into the forest.

The day was warm and in fact a hot stretch of weather had not yet run its course. There had been no rain for many days and the woods were dry; they were also hot. It takes a long time for the heat to penetrate the forests but once it does, they retain it and oftentimes become most uncomfortable.

The two travelers were soon thoroughly warmed up and the perspiration rolled from their faces in great drops. Nor did the load they carried seem any lighter on account of the heat.

"Whew!" exclaimed George, after a mile or more had been covered. "This is awful."

"Well, you can stay here and get scalped if you want to," said Alec shortly. "Personally I'd rather go on to Vincennes."

"Is it on this side of the river?"

"No, the other."

"How will we get across?"

"In a boat of course."

"A ferry?"

"Well, you didn't think I was going to make a boat, did you?"

Alec was irritable and when in that condition he was apt to be sarcastic. Perceiving this

George decided the best thing for him to do was to let his companion alone; he knew the state of mind the trapper was in but it did not worry him. He knew that though Alec might sometimes be short or curt in his manner, his heart was of pure gold. If he knew a man was deserving, Alec would gladly give him the coat off his back or the last cent he owned. Such qualities are more important than pleasant talk.

George suffered intensely from the heat, however. He was also very tired and he longed for some cool spot where he might lie down and sleep; a cooling draught of water would also have been appreciated at this time. On they plodded, however, neither one speaking, and as Alec showed no signs of stopping George began to lose hope of securing the much-wished-for rest. He would not have admitted his feelings to Alec for the world, however.

All at once Alec halted. "We'll rest here," he announced briefly.

"Is it safe?" questioned George. Now that the chance had come he was doubtful of its wisdom.

"You sleep and I'll keep watch," said Alec.

"But that's not fair," protested George warmly.

"You heard what I said, didn't you?" demanded Alec. "You're going to sleep while I stay on guard."

"If you'll promise to take turns with me I'll agree to that," said George. "Wake me up in an hour."

"All right, I'll promise that."

"I wish I had a drink of water," sighed George. "I'm certainly thirsty."

"There's a spring right over there," said Alec, pointing to a spot some thirty yards distant. "I know every foot of this country."

George quickly went over to the spring, and kneeling on the bank took a long drink of the clear cold water. Then he dashed some over his head and let it run down his spine; he held his arms deep down in the crystal pool and presently felt very much refreshed. Returning to the spot where Alec was waiting he threw himself upon the ground and almost immediately went fast asleep. Thoughts of hostile red men did not disturb the tired young trapper's rest.

Alec had agreed to let him sleep for an hour,

but it seemed only a moment when George felt himself being shaken by the arm and heard the trapper's voice in his ear.

"Wake up," whispered Alec excitedly. "There's some one coming."

CHAPTER VI

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

INSTANTLY George was wide awake. One of the first things that a life of hardship and adventure teaches is that it may be fatal to waste time in waking up.

"Some one is coming," repeated Alec.

Without a word George seized his gun and after a quick glance at the priming slunk farther back into the bushes. Side by side the two fugitives crouched, waiting for the appearance of the traveler whoever he might be.

The sound of a horse's hoofs rapidly drawing nearer came plainly to their listening ears. They pounded furiously on the dry ground and apparently the horseman was in a desperate hurry. As far as the two companions were able to judge there was but one horse.

"Sounds as though it was running away," whispered George.

"It's queer," muttered Alec with a puzzled look on his face.

A slight trail led along in front of the spot where Alec and George were waiting. Undoubtedly the horseman must pass close by. Nearer and nearer thundered the flying hoofs.

"Have your gun ready," cautioned Alec in a whisper.

With rifles ready for instant use the fugitives crouched in silence.

Suddenly a sight that caused them both to gasp met their astonished gaze. Down the forest trail came a big black horse, flecked with foam, wild-eyed and with nostrils distended. Around his neck clung a man; his face was white and his eyes were wide with terror. There was no saddle nor bridle on the horse, and its rider maintained his place on its back by the narrowest of margins.

"Stop him!" shouted Alec and not hesitating a moment he leaped out in the pathway in front of the runaway.

The horse swayed violently at the unexpected figures suddenly springing out from the bushes. The shock was too great for his rider and as if shot from a springboard he flew from the

horse's back, and landed in a heap on the ground. Face downward he lay, not moving a muscle.

"He's dead," cried George in alarm, as he sprang forward to the side of the dismounted horseman. The horse itself had continued its mad pace and its hoof beats could now be heard growing fainter and fainter in the distance.

"Dead, me eye!" said the man on the ground faintly.

"Roll him over," ordered Alec, who had not heard the man's remark. "We'll soon see what's wrong with him."

The dismounted rider rolled himself over, however. With many a groan and sigh he turned over until he lay flat on his back. His face was dirty from its contact with the soil and he was bleeding from a slight cut on his forehead. A feeble grin spread over his countenance, which was unmistakably Irish in its cast.

"Well," exclaimed Alec, "where were you going on that horse?"

"Ye'll hav' t'ask th' horse," said the Irishman. " 'Twas he was th' boss, not me."

"Are you hurt?" demanded George.

"Me feelings is hurt, and me body is somewhat sore," replied the son of Erin. "Otherwise I'm foine."

"Come over to the spring and get a little cold water on your face and head," urged George. "That'll fix you up."

"A good scheme, me bye," said the Irishman. "Will ye help me up?"

He was quickly assisted to his feet and a moment later was bathing his dirty and blood-smeared face in the cool spring water. When he had finished they all sat down on the bank and Alec turned to their new-found friend.

"Well," he exclaimed. "Tell us all about it."

"I'll do thot," said the Irishman readily. "First of all I want t' tell ye me name; it is Dinnis O'Connell."

"Dennis is a good old Irish name," smiled George.

"Me name was nearly changed t' mud jist now though," said Dennis grimly. "Thot blitherin' black baste of a horse was near the end o' me."

"He was fast," said Alec.

"Indade he was," agreed Dennis, "but I'd

raythер take it a bit aysier meself even though 'tis slower. I prafer th' solid ground to the back of a wild horse."

George and Alec smiled at the grim earnestness of their new friend. His face was very serious, though like the most of his race he could not help seeing the humorous side of life. The two woodsmen told their names to Dennis, and the introductions being over the Irishman proceeded with the tale of his adventures.

" 'Twas thim bloody Injuns," he exclaimed. " 'Twas thim was after me. The divils!" he added angrily. "I was pursuing me paceful course through the woods whin I hears a horrible yell an' two o' thim red fellers comes a swoopin' down on me. Well, I was shure 'twas all over, but instid o' killin' me on th' spot they took me prisoner. Thot was yisterday. Last night we slept side by side in the woods, one o' thim on each side o' me. I kept thinkin' t' meself all th' time how it was I could escape thim, for I sortinly had no desire t' be tortured for th' intirtainmint o' the Injins' wives back in their village."

"Pretty hard to get away with one on each side of you I should think," remarked George.

"Th' word 'hard' does not ixpress it," said Dennis. "Their two horses was standin' close at hand an' I was figurin' how to jump up an' get on th' back o' one o' th' bastes an' make me escape. I had scarcely been on a horse in all me life."

"I can believe that all right," smiled George.

"Thim Injins was so clost I could feel thim up ag'inst me," continued Dennis. "I was not tied for I suppose they thought they could handle me with no trouble, but I fooled thim. Jist as 'twas commincin' t' git light this marnin' I gave thim a turrible jolt. They was both o' thim lyin' face up; I raised both me hands up very quiet, and thin I doubled up me fists and I brought thim down one on each o' thim Injin's stummicks."

Dennis smiled broadly at the recollection.

"Well, say," he continued. "Ye should a' seen thim. They give one turrible grunt an' I'll bet their supper was greatly disturbed. A blow in th' stummick is always bad ye know, but whin yez are asleep 'tis worse. Before they recovered thimsilves I gave thim each a good belt in the eye an' thin I ran. I grabbed th'

first horse I seen an' I leaped on his back an' off I wint."

"Where did you plan to go?" asked Alec.

"I had no plans but to lave thot district. I left it all right, too. One o' th' Injins come t' life an' sint a bullet flyin' after me; it sthruck me horse across the hind quarther, jist a glancin' blow, but it made him run. I thot he was niver plannin' to stop an' if ye hadn't scairt him so he threw me off, I suppose we'd a been goin' yit."

"I didn't mean to have you thrown off," said George. "I was just trying to stop the horse."

"I'm glad ye did whot ye did," said Dennis feelingly. "I've had enough horseback ridin' t' last me all me life."

"Where were you going when the Indians captured you?" inquired Alec.

"T' Vincennes."

"That's where we are bound," exclaimed Alec. "Your horse helped you over a lot of ground all right."

"What were you going to do at Vincennes, Dennis?" asked George.

"T' git away from th' Injins," said Dennis. "Near th' spot where I live this feller they call

th' Prophet has a big camp full o' th' lawless beggars. It was gettin' too hot fur Dinnis an' I decided to lave an' go t' some place where a mon could live in pace an' quiet."

"Did any Indians attack you up there?" inquired George.

"Not me," said Dennis. "They've been murtherin' other poor and paceful sittlers ivery now an' thin, howiver. I understhand thot the Governor is t' call out the militia an' it's me that wants t' be one o' th' first t' jine."

"I'll join myself if they want volunteers," exclaimed Alec readily. "I think it's time the settlers had some security on the border."

"I'll join too," echoed George. "Here's three good recruits right here."

"If we iver git t' Vincennes," sighed Dennis. "Thim bloody Injins will do all in their power t' prevint our reachin' there."

"Well, that's true enough," agreed Alec, "and I think we'd better start on again. Do you feel able to travel all right, George?"

"Yes, indeed," said George. "As a matter of fact I had almost forgotten that I was tired at all."

"Yez had better git t' some safe place as

fast as ye can," said Dennis, looking solemnly at George. "Any lad with hair th' color o' yours had better be careful. A fine rid scalp like thot would sortinly please one o' thim Injin chiefs."

"They'll have some trouble taking this one, I can tell you," remarked George grimly. "I need this scalp myself."

"Well, let's be moving then before they come and take it away from you," exclaimed Alec, rising to his feet.

"Oh, but I'm sore," groaned Dennis, painfully lifting himself. "I sortinly would not want t' ride very much on horseback."

"You'd soon get used to it," smiled George. "I wish we had three good horses now and we'd soon be there."

"For mesilf," said Dennis, "I'd almost rather see Injins than horses. I'm through with thim beasts except t' draw me in a cart."

The three travelers, however, saw neither horses nor Indians, and as dusk began to settle over the landscape they came within sight of Vincennes.

CHAPTER VII

VINCENNES

IT was fast growing dark as the tired little party arrived at their destination. The settlement at Vincennes, however, had not gone to rest and they found there many others like themselves who had fled from their homes to seek the protection of their fellow settlers. Refugees were constantly pouring in from all directions to escape the depredations of the Indian bandits.

The little town, situated on the banks of the Wabash River, was full of bustle and excitement. Almost every person there had some experience to relate of an encounter with the red men. The main topic of conversation was Tecumseh, his brother Ellskwatawa, the Prophet, and the raids and murders perpetrated by their followers.

"Well, what is going to be done about it all?" asked Alec of an old acquaintance of his,

Pierre Lamartine by name. Lamartine was French, a rover, and had lived on the frontier since his early childhood; he was now over fifty years old, known the length and breadth of the border settlements and generally regarded as the best rifle shot in the country. His hair was grizzled and his face seamed and browned by constant exposure to the wind and sun. He was large and the fact that he wore coat and leggings of tanned deerskin and a coonskin hat on his head made him a very striking figure.

"Ziss is going to be done about it," said Pierre Lamartine in response to Alec's question. "All ze inhabitants round about here zey hold a meeting on ziss spot not ver' long ago; zey draw up a petition and send it to ze president of ze United States at Washington. In ziss petition all zere grievances zey are set forth and zey demand zat a stop might be put to zese outrage."

"Will it do any good?" asked Alec.

"Of course zey do some good," exclaimed Pierre. "Eet iss too early yet to get a reply, but you just wait till she come and zen you will see. What iss a government for if it iss not to protect ze people."

"But the people must stand by the government," said George.

"Certainly," agreed Pierre. "A man should give as well as take."

"I'd like t' give thim Injins somethin'," exclaimed Dennis feelingly.

"Well, I guess maybe you'll get a chance," said Alec. "If they call out the militia you can enlist."

"I thought it had already been called out," said Dennis. "Ye know I told ye they hod."

"You are ahead of ze time, I guess," smiled Pierre. "Do not worry, zough; if you wish to fight ze Indians you will get your chance without much question."

"Well I'm not crazy about fightin' thim," said Dennis. "At the same time," he added with a broad grin, "I don't think ye iver heard of an Irishman runnin' away from a fight."

"That's true," laughed Alec. "No one could ever accuse the Irish of being cowards, that's sure."

"By ze way," said Pierre, "where it is that you three are planning to sleep for tonight?"

"On the ground, if we can't find anything better," said Alec.

"Zat reminds me of a story about Tecumseh," smiled Pierre. "He was having a meeting with Governor Harrison here in Vincennes; he had but just finished making a speech and was going to seat himself in a chair when he found zat none had been provided for heem. Ze governor he order one at once and when ze attendant hand it to Tecumseh he say to ze chief 'Your father requests you to take a chair.' Well, Tecumseh was mad for he thought zat he had been mooch insult. 'My *father?*' he exclaim. 'Ze sun iss my father, and ze earth iss my mother; and on her bosom I will repose,' and he sat down on ze groun' in Indian fashion. He iss a ver' proud man all right."

"What does the name *Tecumseh* mean in the Shawnee language?" asked George, who was greatly interested in everything having to do with the famous chief.

"It means, *a tiger crouching for its prey,*" answered Pierre readily.

"I'll be hopin' I'm not his prey," said Dennis solemnly.

"Still if he only crouches it isn't so bad," laughed George. "If he should spring that would be different."

"An' if he crouches too long he might catch a cramp," suggested Dennis. "Thin he would not be able t' spring at all."

"Enough of ziss," laughed Pierre. "Come wiz me and I will zee zat you all get comfortable places for to sleep tonight."

No one of the little band of travelers made any objection to this suggestion. They were very tired after their experiences and their main desire was to sleep. George in particular was almost fagged out; he had had no rest for nearly thirty-six hours and all that time had been almost constantly on the move. Dennis too was loud in his praises of the man who invented beds, and expressed a desire to honor him by remaining in one all night and most of the following day.

Through the town the little party marched. Soldiers stood around in small groups or strolled up and down; they were regulars stationed at Vincennes and hailed with delight the prospect of Indian fighting to break the monotony of the military routine.

Darkness had now settled over the country and lights in the windows of the houses, and here and there in the barracks, showed that

many were thinking of rest. Straight through the town Pierre led his three friends; a house standing on the outskirts was his goal and to this he made his way. A candle burned in the narrow hallway, lighting up the bare walls and ceiling with a flickering glare.

As the party of four were about to enter, a man suddenly appeared in the doorway. With a curt greeting to Pierre he hurried out and was quickly swallowed up by the darkness. George, who walked by the side of the Frenchman, could unconsciously feel his companion clench his hands and steel his muscles. Once inside, and the door shut, Pierre turned fiercely to his three friends.

"Did you see zat man?" he demanded tensely.

"I did," said George.

"So I did too," added Dennis. "I noticed nothing queer about him though; he had two feet and two hands an'—"

"Mark zat man," said Pierre, interrupting the gay-hearted Irishman. Evidently he considered the matter nothing to joke about.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Alec curiously.

"Remember heem!" warned Pierre. "He will give us trouble some day."

"What makes you think so?" inquired Alec. "Anyhow I don't believe I'd know him if I saw him again."

"He iss name Arnold Burch," said Pierre. "I will point heem out to you in ze daylight tomorrow."

"You suspect him?" said George much interested. "What's it about?"

"Sometime I will tell you," answered Pierre. "Not now, but later. Come wiz me," he added, and picking up the candle he led the way up the stairs. Seeing that further questions were useless George followed in silence and behind him came Alec and Dennis.

At the head of the stairs was a door and opening it, Pierre ushered his guests into a large room containing a double bed and a cot.

"Is this your house, Pierre?" asked Alec.

"No, but my sister's," answered the Frenchman. "At present she iss absent wiz her husband."

"What was that man Arnold Burch doing in your sister's house?" inquired George, who was determined to find out all he could about

the man who had so evidently aroused their host's ire.

"He iss a boarder here," said Pierre and dismissed the subject. "I hope zat you will be comfortable," he added, and wishing the three friends good night he withdrew from the room.

"I should say that he had no use for Misther Burch," observed Dennis after Pierre's departure.

"Evidently not," agreed George. "I wonder what it's all about."

"Ye'll know later," said Dennis. "He said he'd tell us."

"I shouldn't worry about it," remarked Alec. "I know I shan't let it keep me awake anyway," and the trapper laid himself down on the cot and was asleep almost instantly.

"It looks as if you and I were going to sleep together, Dennis," observed George with a smile.

"It does that," Dennis agreed. "I don't know if I like the idea of sleepin' with a red light in me face all night though."

"Do you mean my hair?" demanded George.

"Ye didn't t'ink I hod refirince to th' moon, did ye?"

"Insult it all you want," laughed George. "It suits me all right."

The young pioneer was soon ready for bed and as he lay there in the darkness his thoughts were of Arnold Burch and the strange enmity that Pierre showed for the man. What was it all about? George was more curious than most people and the matter puzzled him. He did not like things he did not understand and he promised himself that he would solve this mystery as soon as possible.

He quickly fell asleep, only to dream of Arnold Burch. He saw the man stealing upon him and he was powerless to move; his limbs seemed to be paralyzed and his muscles refused to act. He saw hatred and malice outlined on every feature of his enemy's face and he knew that a critical time had come. Closer and closer crept the man; George tried to cry out but his voice died away in his throat. He set himself for the shock.

Burch stretched out his great gnarled hands and George shuddered as he saw them coming nearer and nearer to his throat. Suddenly Burch sprang at him and they became locked in each other's grasp. Back and forth they

wrestled, the advantage resting first with one and then the other. Gradually, however, George felt his strength ebbing and he realized that his doom was sealed. He could see the fierce exultation on the dark countenance of his enemy.

Gradually his head was bent back; all at once Burch wrenched one arm free and raised it above his head ready to strike. George shut his eyes and resigned himself to his fate. Suddenly as the blow was about to fall George awoke.

"Stop it! Stop it!" said a voice in his ear. "What are ye tryin' t' do? Commit murder?"

"What's the matter?" demanded George, now wide awake and sitting up in bed.

"Ye ask what th' matter is an' you wit' a grip on me throat that would stop me brathin' intirely in about wan more second. I'll take it back about yer rid hair if ye'll lave me alone from now on."

"I was dreaming about Arnold Burch," sighed George, and lying down once more he almost immediately dropped off to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII

A REMARK BY PIERRE

AS the days passed, more and more people poured into Vincennes. Every one to arrive had some new tale of Indian outrage to relate and many had had personal experiences with the savages. The main topic of conversation was the reply that the president would send to their petition.

This speculation was soon settled, however. As speedily as the slow means of communication in those days would allow, a message came from Washington. Alec was the first one of the party of four to learn of its contents, and hastened to inform his three companions. He found them returning from the river where they had been bathing. As sometimes happens in early September the weather was very warm.

"Well," exclaimed Alec excitedly, "a reply has come from the president."

"What does it say?" demanded all three, almost with one voice.

"Well," said Alec, who was feeling very important at being the distributer of such weighty news, "there's a regiment of United States' troops coming here from Pittsburgh. I suppose they're already on the way."

"Spake up; ye're among frinds," urged Dennis as Alec paused. The trapper did not want to impart all his information at once and he was trying to make it last as long as possible.

"Well," continued Alec, "the governor is authorized to raise the militia."

"Who's going to command?" inquired George.

"He is."

"The governor?"

"Yes, and he's not only going to command the militia but the whole force of troops as well."

"I inlist," said Dennis briefly.

"And I enlist," added George, smiling at Dennis's way of announcing his intentions.

"As for me, I also shall enlist," said Pierre.

"Well, I guess I'm with you three," observed Alec soberly.

"Hooray!" shouted Dennis. "Three cheers

fur Guv'nor Harrison; and thin three fur th' Irish,'' he added under his breath.

At this moment Arnold Burch was seen approaching. He eyed the little group shrewdly and then walked over to the spot where they were standing.

''What's all the excitement?'' he asked curiously.

A damper seemed to be thrown on the four friends almost at once. Burch always affected them that way, though they did not know why. At least, three of them did not, and whatever reasons Pierre had for not liking the man thus far he had kept them to himself. Even the irrepressible Dennis seemed to lose some of his spirits when Burch came near.

''The governor is going to call out the militia, and a regiment of regulars is coming from Pittsburgh,'' said George.

A shadow momentarily flitted across Burch's face but it was gone at once and he resumed his mask-like expression again.

''So?'' he remarked calmly. ''That's very interesting.'' He turned on his heel and walked away towards the center of the town.

In silence the four friends stood and gazed

after the retreating figure. Then with a common impulse they turned and looked at one another, bewilderment showing itself on every face.

"That's a queer bird," remarked Dennis.

"Well, I guess he is," Alec agreed solemnly.

"What do you make of him, Pierre?" inquired George, anxious to hear the Frenchman express an opinion on the subject.

"I will say but zis," said Pierre fiercely. "Some day I will put a stop to Meester Burch."

"Tell us what there is about him that you don't like," urged Alec.

"No," said Pierre with a shake of his head. "I cannot do zat. Some day, but not now."

Slowly they returned to the town and there they found an abundance of activity and excitement. As they neared their residence, if a simple cabin could be called by such a name, Governor Harrison himself rode by. In admiration the four comrades gazed at the fine looking man who was later destined to become president of the United States.

"Three cheers for th' guv'nor," shouted Dennis enthusiastically. He waved his cap around his head and the little group of people

standing nearby cheered lustily. The governor smiled and tipped his hat in acknowledgment.

"A fine man!" said Dennis as the governor rode off down the street.

"They come no better," said Alec, "and I don't know any one I would rather serve under."

"This will be a bloody war, if it comes," remarked George. "I'd hate to be captured by the Indians; I can't say I have any desire to be tortured."

"Don't you know that Tecumseh promised Governor Harrison that there would be no cruelties inflicted on prisoners?" demanded Alec.

"When did he do that?"

"Why some time ago, when the governor had just about decided that there was no chance of preventing war, he had a talk with Tecumseh and they both agreed to that."

"Will he live up to his agreement?" demanded George skeptically.

"I think so," observed Pierre. "Tecumseh he is a man who tell ze truth."

"That's right," agreed Alec readily. "He's a pretty good Indian, but he has a mistaken

sense of duty. Even though his tribe has nothing at all to do with the land that the government just bought from some of the other tribes, he thinks it is his duty to keep the white men out. At the same time I don't believe he'd torture prisoners."

"But suppose he was absint from the spot whin we was captured," suggested Dennis.

"In that case it might go bad with us," Alec admitted. "Still I don't expect to be captured, do you?"

"Not unless th' bloody Injin can run faster than me," said Dennis.

His companions laughed at this remark, but they knew full well that the fun-loving Irishman would be the last man of all to run from any one. He apparently feared nothing on the face of the earth.

"Tecumseh isn't at Tippecanoe anyway, is he?" asked George.

"No," said Pierre, "eet iss his brother, ze Prophet, who iss zere."

"And it's the Indians at Tippecanoe who are causing all the trouble, isn't it?"

"Eet iss," Pierre admitted.

"Then," demanded George, "why not blame

the Prophet for the trouble instead of Tecumseh?"

"Because Tecumseh started it," Alec explained. "He has been making a tour of all the tribes to get them to form a league against the Americans and these fellows at Tippecanoe wouldn't dare do what they are doing unless they had his backing and support."

"Just where is Tippecanoe anyway?" inquired George.

"It's up on the north bank of the river here, where the Tippecanoe flows into the Wabash."

"There is some sort of a settlement up there, I suppose."

"Well I guess there is!" exclaimed Alec. "The Prophet has several hundred crazy braves there; young fellows they are, who are out for a lark and some scalps and they think that the Prophet can provide them with both."

"What do you think about that, Dennis?" asked George playfully.

"I think they can hav' their lark, but they'd better be leavin' me scalp alone," replied Dennis readily. "I need thot mesilf."

They moved up to the center of the town,

near the barracks, and joined one of the groups that was busily discussing the situation.

"Couriers are being sent all around this part of the country to get volunteers," said one man.

"There'll be plenty of them all right," remarked another. "The people are just about ready to put an end to all this murder and robbery."

"Personally I think the British are at the bottom of all this trouble," announced the man who had spoken first, a great rawboned hunter.

"You think so?" exclaimed the talker.

"I certainly do. For months I believe they have been trying to stir up hostilities between this country and the Indians. They furnish supplies and ammunition and everything else to them; then they try to poison their minds against the Americans."

"What do you think about that, Pierre?" demanded a man on the outside of the fast growing circle of men. "Do you think the English are trying to start a war between us and the Indians?" The French trapper's opinion was highly valued on all subjects.

"Ah, I do not know," said Pierre with a shrug of his shoulders. "But perhaps Meester

Burch can tell us zat; I understan' zat he has but just come back from Canada, an' maybe knows ze conditions." As he spoke he turned and looked at Burch who was standing in the crowd.

An angry flush spread itself over Burch's face and he flashed a look of intense hatred at Pierre, who stood waiting expectantly for his answer.

"I don't know a thing about it," he exclaimed hotly. "Why should I know?"

"As you have but just come from Canada I thought perhaps—"

"I know nothing about it, I said," Burch interrupted him in a tone of great exasperation.

"If Meester Burch does not know, an' he has just come from Canada, how iss it zat I should know?" Pierre asked of the crowd. "I have not even an opinion. All I know iss zat things are ver' bad."

"Not so bad," exclaimed the man who had started the conversation. "Any white man is as good as two Indians."

"Do not be so sure of zat," warned Pierre. "It does not pay to think your enemy iss a poor fighter. Zese varriors wiz Tecumseh are brave

and zey will fight hard; do not think zey will not."

"Well, we'll all enlist anyhow," exclaimed Alec. He could never remain out of any conversation very long. "With the regulars here, and those on the way, and all the volunteers we'll get we ought to give a good account of ourselves."

A cheer greeted this remark and one man stepped forward and demanded to know if there were any present who would not volunteer. "Hold up your right hand all who are going to enlist," he ordered.

Immediately a score of hands shot up. George looked around to see if any there were who did not respond. "What about Arnold Burch?" he thought. "I wonder if he'll enlist." He suddenly discovered that Burch had disappeared and was in the gathering no longer.

"What made me think of him, I wonder," he murmured under his breath.

CHAPTER IX

SMOKE

THE following day Pierre, Alec, Dennis and George all presented themselves at headquarters for enlistment. Needless to say their services were eagerly accepted and they were at once sworn into the service. Any government would have been glad of the services of four such strapping recruits, men who were used to hardships and were crack shots as well.

"I think I'll make scouts out of you four," said Major White, the officer who administered the oath. "You men ought to know the country around here and be very valuable to us."

"Well, that suits us, I guess," exclaimed Alec heartily. "At least it suits me all right."

"There may be work for you to do very soon," said the major seriously. "Hold yourselves in readiness for orders on short notice."

"We'll be right here, ready and waiting,"

said George heartily. The prospect of adventure and danger was most pleasing to his young heart.

"For the present remain in the house where you are now living," said the major. "I shall expect to be able to reach you there at any time."

He dismissed them with a nod and the four recruits passed outdoors again. Already volunteers were trooping into Vincennes; tents sprang up, and the little frontier town began to assume a real military aspect. Horses were picketed around in little groups; the men were busy grooming their mounts and oiling and polishing their rifles.

Bustle and activity showed on all sides and never was there a more enthusiastic body of men gathered together. They seemed to regard the proposed expedition against the Prophet in the nature of a lark. No one seemed to consider that they might encounter danger or that any harm might befall them. The whole affair they looked upon as a huge picnic.

"Them fellers may not laugh so loud later," remarked Dennis, as he and George stood and watched the busy scene around them.

"No, I don't believe it's all going to be such fun," said George soberly.

"I'm glad for wan thing, though," said Dennis.

"What's that?"

"That I'm not goin' t' be on horseback."

"It's a pretty long walk to Tippecanoe," laughed George.

"I don't care how far it may be," said Dennis positively. "I'll walk to th' North Pole before I git aboard another o' thim beasts."

"You started wrong," smiled George. "If you'd only had a quiet horse and some one to teach you at the beginning you'd have been all right."

"Maybe I did start wrong. Me finish was th' same, for I can tell yez right now I'm through with horses."

Orderlies were galloping to and fro as George and Dennis walked towards the place where their dwelling was located. Men with guns were everywhere in evidence, though that was not an unusual sight in the border towns in those times. Now, however, the men seemed to have more of an air of some definite purpose in view as they walked about the town.

"How old are you, Dennis?" asked George suddenly.

"Twinty-sivin. Why do ye ask?"

"I don't know, I was just wondering. You are nearly ten years older than I am. When did you leave Ireland?"

"Nine years ago, and I'm not sorry nayther."

"There's certainly a difference in the ages of the four of us, isn't there? I'm eighteen, you're twenty-seven, Alec is thirty-five and Pierre must be about forty-five."

"Yis," said Dennis, "but I believe he can outlast any wan of us."

"No doubt of it, I guess," agreed George. "I hope when we are sent out to do any scouting he'll be along."

"An' there's the gintleman now!" exclaimed Dennis as the two young men came within sight of their house.

Pierre came walking out from the cabin holding his rifle in his hand. Alec was lying on the grass under a tree nearby.

"Where are you going, Pierre?" asked George.

"I go to practice my shooting down by ze river. Would you like to go wiz me?"

"I certainly would," exclaimed George, "though I don't see why you need any practice. Are you coming, Dennis?"

"I am, if ye think we ought t' leave th' house."

"Alec, he will stay at ze house," said Pierre. "We will not go far."

"We must get our guns, too," exclaimed George. "If you'll wait for me just a minute I'll run in and get mine; I'll bring yours too, Dennis."

"I thank ye," exclaimed Dennis. "I always make it me practice niver t' do onything that some one ilse will do for me."

Pierre and Dennis had not long to wait, for George soon appeared, a rifle in each hand. He waved good-by to Alec and soon joined his two friends.

"We're off," he exclaimed joyously. "Where are we going, Pierre?"

"But a short distance, down here by ze river."

"What are you going to shoot at? There are no Indians on the river, are there?"

"We can set up a mark."

"If yer frind Burch was only here ye could

fire at him," observed Dennis, at the same time nudging George gently with his elbow.

"Zat dog!" exclaimed Pierre hotly, falling easily into the trap which the young Irishman had set for him. Dennis knew the trapper's weak spot and he loved to tease. Unlike many jokers, however, he did not mind if he was the "butt" himself once in a while.

"I hate zat man!" cried Pierre.

"Why do yez hate 'im?" inquired Dennis innocently.

"I cannot say. If I should prove what are my suspicions I could have heem hanged. It ees just possible zat I may be wrong and so I keep silent. I think zat I am not wrong though."

"He's always been dacent enough t' me," observed Dennis, once more nudging his young companion.

"I tell you zat man iss a snake!" Pierre fairly hissed. "But I must not talk about heem; I shall lose my temper."

"Why, Pierre," exclaimed Dennis, feigning great surprise. "I do not understand how ye can feel like that about ony mon, or baste even."

"Not even a horse?" inquired George.

"We will change th' subjict," said Dennis with a grin. "Ye have me there."

They soon came to the bank of the river and turning northward they walked along its course for perhaps a quarter of a mile. Here a small peninsula thrust itself out into the stream and on its tip end the three scouts took up their positions.

"Well what are we going to fire at?" inquired George. "I don't see anything here."

"Look over zere," Pierre directed him.

"All I see is a lot of waterlilies," said George.

"Well?"

"You mean to shoot at them?"

"Why not? Don't ze buds make a fine mark?"

"They make a hard one," observed Dennis grimly. "They're not so large at this distance, ye know."

"How far away are they, Pierre?" asked George.

"I do not know. Mebbe one hundred yards."

"Here goes," exclaimed Dennis. "Thot one farthest out," and he fired as he spoke. The bullet struck some four or five feet beyond the

lily bud, however, and the Irishman snorted disgustedly at his poor aim. "Let's see ye try it now," he said to George.

George's aim was a little better but he also fired wide of the mark. "That's not an easy target," he exclaimed feelingly. "An Indian is certainly bigger than that anyway, so why not shoot at something the size of a man?"

"Th' pint is," said Dennis, "that if yez can hit a bud that size, an Injin will be aisy for ye."

"Zat iss eet exactly," exclaimed Pierre. "Now watch."

He brought his rifle quickly to his shoulder and apparently without half taking aim, he fired. The bud, cut off cleanly from the stem, flew up into the air and disappeared in the nearby rushes.

"That's the stuff!" cried Dennis enthusiastically. "Good-by to Taycumseh!"

"You must be a natural-born rifle shot, Pierre," said George admiringly. "No man could learn to do that just by practice."

"On ze contrary," said Pierre, "I was a ver' poor shot when it was I first began to shoot. It iss all practice and it took hard work and a

long time. Zere iss nothing zat can be done without zem.''

''Without what?''

''Practice and hard work. I know zat is so.''

For a half-hour they sat and fired at different objects and with varying success. Pierre's aim of course was always good and it was seldom that he missed his mark. The other two were by no means poor shots, but they did not compare with the clever Frenchman. As Dennis expressed it, ''I guess we nade some o' that 'practice an' hard work.' ''

Pierre finally started back towards the town while Dennis and George lingered a while to see if they could find some berries growing in the nearby woods. They were wandering around under the trees when Dennis suddenly grasped George by the arm and pulled him quickly behind a tree.

''Look there!'' he whispered excitedly.

Following Dennis's instructions George peered cautiously out from their hiding-place. The sight that met his gaze was Arnold Burch, walking swiftly along, a rifle in his right hand. Every few paces he glanced furtively over his shoulder as if he was afraid that he was being

followed. Almost holding their breath Dennis and George watched him pass. He was scarcely a hundred feet distant from the spot where they stood, but he did not see them.

"Where do you suppose he's going?" whispered George.

"We'll see," observed Dennis in a low voice.

"You mean to follow him?"

"Sortinly."

With Dennis leading the way the two young scouts stole out from their hiding-place and took up Burch's trail. They proceeded carefully and with as little noise as possible. A faint path led through the woods and it was this course that Burch followed. Footprints in the soft earth showed the two friends that they were on the right track. For perhaps a half-mile they trailed the man whom they suspected, though of what they suspected him neither one had any clear idea.

A break in the woods showed a short distance ahead and coming to the edge of the trees the two young scouts halted, and peered out cautiously from behind a sheltering bush. In the center of the clearing stood Arnold Burch.

"Hist!" whispered Dennis, and catching his

companion by the arm he drew him down beside him. Curiously and with wondering eyes they watched Burch who still glanced frequently about him, as though fearing detection in what he was about to do.

"What's he up to, do you suppose?" whispered George.

"Ssh!" cautioned Dennis. "Watch."

Apparently satisfied that he was alone and unobserved Burch presently busied himself in gathering a pile of wood in the center of the clearing. In a few moments he seemed to have collected enough to satisfy him, and straightway made preparations for a fire. He piled up his wood in a circular fashion leaving a bare space in the middle and taking some tinder from his pouch knelt down with flint and steel to kindle the blaze.

"What's th' beggar up to?" mused Dennis. "Half his wood is green, too."

A moment later a spark settled in the tinder and after much vigorous blowing by Burch a tiny flame appeared. Heaping dried moss and small sticks on the blaze Burch soon nursed it into a crackling fire. Then he began to pile on the green wood that Dennis had noticed. Im-

mediately thick white smoke rose in a heavy circular column straight above the trees.

More and more puzzled as time went on the two watchers gazed out from their hiding-place. They were completely mystified by the man's strange actions and in silent wonder they watched the heavy white smoke mount heavenwards through the still air.

"He's signaling to somebody I believe," whispered George.

"Look at 'im now!" said Dennis. "He's takin' off his coat."

Burch removed his jacket and then did a strange thing. Taking his stand close beside the smoking fire he grasped his jacket collar with both hands and suddenly began to flick it back and forth through the smoke.

"What in hivin's name—" began Dennis, when, "Look," exclaimed George suddenly. "Look up in the air."

Mounting in constant succession above the tree tops appeared a series of great rings of smoke. Every time that Burch snapped his coat through the column a ring was formed which mounted higher and higher until it was dissolved in thin air far above the forest. Ten

of the huge rings George and Dennis counted before Burch ceased his efforts.

While they crouched and watched him he put on his jacket again and then proceeded to extinguish the fire; with a few well directed kicks he soon scattered it far and wide.

"Who was he signaling to?" demanded George.

"How do I know?" queried Dennis. "I don't understand it at all."

"Here he comes," whispered George and the two young watchers drew back into the shelter of the bush which hid them. A moment later Burch passed their hiding-place, walking swiftly back towards Vincennes. Scarcely stirring and holding their breath in check George and Dennis watched him go, and neither made any move to rise until his stealthy footsteps had died away in the forest.

"Come," exclaimed Dennis at last. "Back we go t' Vincinnes an' we must tell Pierre o' this."

"He'll certainly be excited," said George, "and maybe he'll tell us why it is he suspects Burch and what he suspects him of."

Back through the forest the two youths made

their way, speaking but seldom and walking slowly, fearing lest they should overtake Burch. They had no desire to be seen following his trail through the woods.

At last they emerged from the shelter of the trees and saw ahead of them the buildings and the fort of the little frontier city. As they drew near, the figure of a man suddenly appeared, hurrying towards them.

"Here comes Pierre," cried George as he recognized the tall man who was running swiftly towards them. "Do you think anything can be wrong? He seems to be in an awful rush."

"Whin I tell him about Burch he'll be in more of a hurry," said Dennis, anticipating much pleasure in relating to Pierre what they had seen.

He had no chance to arouse the Frenchman's anger, however, for before he could speak, Pierre shouted at them.

"Come," he cried. "Where have you been? Major White he want us and it iss I who have looked for you everywhere. We must report at once."

At these words all thoughts of Burch disap-

peared from the minds of the two young scouts, and, accompanied by Pierre, they hurried back to the town full of wonder and speculation as to the summons they had received.

CHAPTER X

A MISSION

"WE must go to heem fully equip'," said Pierre. "So we must stop at ze house."

"Where's Alec?" inquired George.

"He wait zere for us to come."

A few moments later they arrived at their dwelling-place and entering the front door bounded eagerly up the stairs to the room where they were quartered. It was the work of a very short time to gather up the few things they would need and presently they were ready to depart.

"I haven't seen Alec around," said George, who was the first one to complete his preparations.

"Nor have I," said Pierre. "He say he wait here too."

"Suppose I go downstairs and look around outside for him," suggested George. "I'll wait for you two down there."

"Ver' good," agreed Pierre, and George began to descend the steep and narrow stairway. Reaching the bottom he started to walk towards the door when the sound of voices issuing from a nearby room arrested him.

"Whew, but you smell of smoke," exclaimed a voice that George recognized as belonging to his friend Alec. "What have you been doing?"

"Is it any of your business?" demanded a voice harshly. George knew the second speaker to be Burch and he listened intently.

"Well, I don't know that it is," said Alec coolly. "Still I don't see that it's anything to get mad about."

"Have you got what you came into my room for?" asked Burch sharply.

"I guess so," said Alec.

"Well, then, get out!"

George heard a chair pushed back and so scraped along the floor as if some one had risen hurriedly to his feet.

"I'll get out," drawled Alec. George had heard that tone in his friend's voice before and he knew it to be dangerous.

"Still I warn you," continued Alec in the

same drawling voice, "that if my friends weren't waiting for me I wouldn't leave until I'd dusted off this floor with you."

There was no answer and presently Alec appeared in the doorway. "Hello there, George!" he exclaimed, spying his young friend. "Where are the others?"

As he spoke Dennis and Pierre appeared at the top of the stairway. They hurried down, and joining the others made their way outdoors, and at a fast walk proceeded in the direction of Major White's quarters.

Pierre walked ahead with Alec and engaged him in a low-voiced conversation so that George had no opportunity to inquire the reason for the dispute with Burch. Before long, however, Alec dropped back and George questioned him eagerly.

"What were you fighting with Burch about?" he demanded.

"Why, I went into his room to get my flint and steel that he borrowed this afternoon; I made the remark that he smelled of wood smoke and he got mad. You heard him, didn't you?

"He said he had lost his and he had no way of lighting his pipe; you know that filthy old

thing he smokes. He was going to take a little walk, he said, and asked if I'd mind."

"He didn't smoke his pipe," said George.

"How do you know?"

"Here we are," exclaimed Dennis, before George could answer. A moment later they were ushered into the presence of Major White.

"Pierre," inquired the major, "are you and your scouts ready for duty?"

"We are," said Pierre simply.

"Well then," said Major White, "what I want you to do is this. I have word that a large band of Indians is operating some twenty miles or so up the Wabash from here. I wish to find out if possible just how big a force is there and where they seem to be headed."

"We will see what we can find out about zem," said Pierre.

"Good," exclaimed the major. "That is just what I want. When can you start?"

"Now."

"Excellent. If you require food, stop and see the quartermaster who has instructions to furnish you with what you may need."

"We go at once," said Pierre. "When we have ze information we return."

"That's the way to talk!" exclaimed the major heartily. "I hope to see you back again soon and good luck to you."

The four scouts saluted and turned and walked out of the small office.

Many of the soldiers lolling about nodded to them as they passed, for they had made numerous acquaintances during their short stay at Vincennes. Nearly every one knew Pierre anyway. On their way to the quartermaster's department they met Governor Harrison riding past on his horse. Every one of the little band drew himself up proudly as their commander galloped past them, and vowed in his heart that Tecumseh should rue the day he began to stir up the tribes against the white settlers.

A halt of a few moments was made for some needed supplies and then on they went. In a short time they left the settlement and traveling northward struck into the forest. Pierre led the way and the pace he set was so speedy that any attempt to talk was almost out of the question. Every one saved his breath to use on the march.

It was afternoon when they left Vincennes and after several hours of steady marching the

slanting rays of the sun through the trees foretold the approach of evening.

"It'll be dark soon, Pierre," ventured Alec finally.

The Frenchman halted. "Yes," he agreed. "We must camp."

"Where did you plan to go?" asked Alec.

"Zere iss a stream but a short distance from here," said Pierre. "We should arrive zere before eet grows dark."

"Some food an' sleep would suit Dinnis, all right," observed the young Irishman. "An' if it wasn't for George's rid hair now, I'd be havin' a hard time t' see me way."

"That's enough of that," observed George good-naturedly. "Let's go on, Pierre, and reach our camp as soon as we can."

Without another word Pierre took up the march and plunged forward through the forest. Presently they arrived at a small open place in the woods, and straight across it Pierre led the way. Suddenly he stopped and bent over.

"Zere has been a fire here," he observed. "Also ze ground iss still warm." He put his hand on the earth, still warm from the heat of the fire. All the embers had been scattered,

but the charred ground and burnt grass showed where the fire had been.

"Well, that's a funny thing," exclaimed Alec suddenly.

"What do you mean?" queried George curiously.

"This fire was built in a circle. See, there is a regular ring and the earth in the middle has not been charred at all."

George and Dennis glanced quickly at each other, an expression of wonder mixed with anxiety showing on their young faces.

"What you say iss so, Alec," said Pierre and he examined the ground more closely. "Why do you suppose it was done zat way?"

"To make smoke-rings probably," observed George.

"To do what?" demanded Alec.

"To make smoke-rings," George repeated.

"What are you talking about?"

"Ask Dennis here," exclaimed George. "He saw the same thing that I did today. He was with me when we saw Burch—"

"Burch?" cried Pierre. "What iss it zat zat viper do?"

"We were watching him all the time you

were looking for us," said George. "After we had stopped shooting at targets we were walking through the woods when whom should we see coming sneaking along but—"

The sudden crack of a rifle cut his words short and a bullet zipping through Pierre's coonskin cap tore it from his head.

"Drop!" ordered Alec sharply, and the four scouts immediately fell flat upon their stomachs on the ground. No sign of any enemy appeared and after a few moments had elapsed and the shot had not been repeated, Pierre spoke in a low voice to his companions.

"We cannot stay here all ze night," he said. "But a half-mile ahead iss ze camp of which I speak; we must go zere."

"Suppose we run into an ambush?" suggested Alec.

"We must take zat chance."

"Certainly we can't stay here," George agreed.

"I agree with ye," muttered Dennis. "There's a big stone in th' middle of me stummick."

"Zere iss beeg risk whatever we do," said Pierre, ignoring Dennis's complaint. "Who

says we shall get up and run for ze shelter of ze woods?''

''I do,'' said Alec. ''I guess it's all we can do. Is this camping-place of yours a safe one?''

''Certainly,'' said Pierre confidently. ''Every one run close to ze ground and do not keep ver' close together. One, two, three!''

At the word three the four scouts arose from the ground, and crouching low ran swiftly towards the near-by trees.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE DARK

MOMENTARILY expecting to hear the rifle shot repeated, they sped along. The sun had now sunk below the level of the tree-tops and the little clearing was filled with the fast-gathering shades of night. Objects took on fantastic shapes in the deepening gloom; stumps seemed to be crouching Indians and a bat swooping low in its evening flight made George feel sure that a whizzing tomahawk had narrowly missed his head.

It was anxious work, but finally they gained the shelter of the forest without being fired upon again. Pierre halted momentarily to see that all of the little party were together; satisfied of that, he once more started on his way, closely followed by his three companions.

The forest had suddenly grown dark. The little band of scouts stole cautiously along, like four black shadows, fearful lest any noise made by their going should reveal their presence to

some unseen enemy. Pierre seemed perfectly familiar with the ground and swung along easily and confidently, though his progress was necessarily slow on account of his comrades. They had more difficulty than the sturdy Frenchman, and had to pick their way over every foot of the course.

It is not much fun to walk through the woods in inky darkness, fearful of an attack any moment and it seemed to George that hours had elapsed before Pierre called a halt.

"We are almost zere," he whispered. "Careful now."

They had been ascending a gentle slope and now stood by the side of a large fallen tree. Over this obstruction Pierre climbed and then dropping upon his hands and knees crawled around the side of a huge rock. The last one to follow Pierre's lead, George soon had the impression that he was entering a cave or room of some kind. He experienced that "shut-in" feeling that a man used to the outdoors has when he goes into a house; the ground felt moist under him as if it were always shielded from light and warmth of any kind.

"Wait here," ordered Pierre finally. While

the Frenchman crept forward, his three comrades waited impatiently for his return. They were also puzzled by his actions and were consumed with curiosity as to the reasons for them.

"What's up?" muttered Dennis.

"I don't know," said George. "Where are you anyway?" He felt for his comrade in the darkness, finally locating him by the touch of his hand.

"Well, I wish I knew," murmured Alec. "I don't like this business of being left alone in the dark, and not knowing where I am."

"Nor I," agreed George. "I believe we're in a cave."

"In a pickle more likely," said Dennis sorrowfully.

"Well, if we're in a cave I hope we get out soon," said Alec.

"Probably Pierre intends to spend the night here," observed George. "If it's a cave he may be the only one who knows about it, so it ought to be safe enough."

"Suppose it's a cave and the Indians come and camp right at the entrance?" Alec suggested. "Would you call that very safe?"

"How would they know we were here?"

"Huh!" snorted Alec. "How does an Indian know anything? For all we know they may have walked side by side with us; those red fiends can do anything in the woods."

"Maybe there's a dozen of them sitting around us in a circle now," suggested George teasingly; he was inclined to be more cheerful than Alec anyway.

"Stop it. Stop it, plaze," begged Dennis. "Ye'll hav' me seein' ghosts nixt thing ye know."

"Ghosts!" exclaimed George. "You know there are no such things."

"They is in Ireland," muttered Dennis, who was nervous and not a bit happy sitting there in the dark. "Ooh!" he blubbered suddenly. "Look!"

Two small round lights appeared above them. The three scouts were tired and their nerves on edge; a cold draught of air struck them and they shuddered. The thing was getting beyond a joke. Where was Pierre anyway? George could hear Dennis mumbling a prayer, and the thought flashed through his mind that it was a

queer thing about Irishmen that though they feared nothing on earth in the daytime they did not like the dark.

But it was not the dark that made Dennis afraid, so much as the two little lights shining through the dark. His hand clutched George's arm feverishly and George could feel it tremble. He was nervous himself; so also was Alec, but no one spoke. In deep silence they sat and watched the two dim little lights above their heads.

Suddenly there was a weird cry, the lights disappeared and something whirled past them. With a half-stifled moan Dennis clasped George's arm tighter than ever and cowered closer to his friend.

" 'Tis ghosts; I know 'tis ghosts," he moaned.

"Get your gun, Dennis," urged George, striving hard to be brave, though he shook violently with fear.

"We're goin' t' die," sobbed Dennis. " 'Tis an omen o' death."

"Well, I wish you two would stop your noise," exclaimed Alec sharply. "If you don't we'll die fast enough, for every Indian in the

country will hear you and be in here after us. Didn't you ever see an owl before?"

"A what?" demanded George.

"An owl, I said."

"Was that an owl that flew past us?"

"It certainly was; I knew those two little lights were owl's eyes all the time." George was not so sure about the truth of Alec's statement, but he said nothing.

"Thin why in th' name of Saint Patrick, didn't ye say so?" exclaimed Dennis whose fear had now turned to anger. "What was yer p'int in makin' us both think we was seein' ghosts?"

Both Dennis and George now felt deeply ashamed of themselves for their foolish fears, and were thankful that the darkness hid their shamefaced looks. As usually happens when a person is ashamed of himself he also feels angry and tries to blame some one else for what is entirely his own fault. The two young frontiersmen were angry at Alec.

"Here comes another light," said Alec suddenly. "Do you think this is a ghost too?"

In the distance appeared a torch held aloft by some man who was approaching the spot

where the three friends were seated. Everything else was quickly forgotten in the interest this new event created.

"It's Pierre," announced George. "I can see his face."

"An' he's walkin' in a tunnel," said Dennis. "I tho't we was in a cave."

"Well it certainly looks so," said Alec. "I wonder where it leads."

"Maybe it's Tecumseh's cave," George suggested.

"Mebbe it belongs t' that bla'guard brother o' his, th' Prophet," said Dennis. "It may be here that he works his charms."

"You two are crazy tonight," exclaimed Alec. "First you see ghosts and then you talk about this cave belonging to either Tecumseh or the Prophet. Do you suppose that if it belonged to either of them we could possibly stay in here for a second?"

"Are you zere?" asked Pierre, before either Dennis or George could answer Alec's question. He came near and held the blazing torch high above his head.

"All here," replied Alec cheerily.

"Come zen wiz me."

Pierre turned and began to retrace his steps over the route by which he had just come. His three comrades quickly rose to their feet and followed closely at his heels. The flickering torch lighted up their path, and showed rocky walls on each side of them, damp and with water oozing from some of the crevices. Overhead it was the same way, and now and then a large drop would land squarely on the torch, causing it to spit and splutter angrily.

Many sharp corners and right angled turns loomed up in front of them, and once the path led beside a chasm that seemed dark and bottomless in the flickering light. Pierre meanwhile walked ahead confidently, as if he were entirely familiar with his surroundings.

"Will it never end?" whispered Dennis finally.

Scarcely had he spoken when the narrow passageway suddenly widened out and the four scouts found themselves in a spacious room lighted by two torches similar to the one Pierre carried. The three strangers to the place gasped in amazement.

"Say!" exclaimed George enthusiastically. "Isn't this fine?"

"When'd you find this cave, Pierre?" asked Alec.

"I find heem when I young man," replied the Frenchman. "Zere iss no one else who know where he is."

"Suppose the Indians follow our trail," said George. "They might trap us in here and then what would we do?"

"We would go out ze ozzer end," smiled Pierre.

"Where's that?" demanded Dennis.

"Do you see zat curtain?" Pierre pointed to a heavy fur robe that hung at one end of the room.

"I do," said Dennis.

"Well, zat cover anozzer opening. It lead out over ze cliff."

"A cliff?" exclaimed George in surprise.

"Yes," said Pierre. "The hill she steep on zat side; ze valley iss below and zis iss a fine look-out spot. I will show you in ze morning."

"Well, I guess it would only take about two men to defend this place," remarked Alec. "A man could be posted back there near the entrance we used and pick 'em off just as fast as they showed their heads."

"Eet iss one gran' place!" exclaimed Pierre proudly. "I can see all ze valley from here and ze river too."

"How did you ever find it?" asked George curiously.

"I hunt one day. I see fox track and I follow heem. He go in zat door where eet iss we came and so I find ze cave. I cut down zat beeg tree back zere so no one can see ze entrance and I explore eet all. Never has any one else been here and so I think zat no one iss know eet."

"Well, it's a great place all right," said Alec warmly.

"An' food's a great thing too," exclaimed Dennis, "an' so is slape. I'd like a little o' both."

"I agree with you, Dennis," laughed George. "We'll need a rest tonight too because I think tomorrow is likely to be a pretty hard day."

Pierre quickly brought out food from a store he kept in one corner of the cave, and before long the appetites of the four scouts were appeased. Fur rugs were lying around on the ground and presently the weary men were stretched out at full length upon them and were asleep almost instantly. No guard was posted,

for Pierre assured them that they were absolutely safe until daylight at least, for no Indian, no matter how cunning he may be, can follow a faint trail in the inky darkness.

Heavy breathing soon was heard and it seemed to George that he had slept but a moment when he felt himself gently shaken.

He sat up, instantly wide awake and found the cave dimly lighted by the rays of the newly-risen sun streaming through the entrance that had been covered with the fur robe the preceding evening. Pierre was bending over him.

"Come," he whispered. "I will show you somezing."

CHAPTER XII

A RIFLE SHOT

GEORGE quickly rose to his feet and followed Pierre, who led him to the round opening in the cave. Bushes were growing all about the aperture and only a few specks of blue sky appeared through the branches as the two scouts approached.

Pierre reached out, and parting the branches, turned and nodded to George who was close behind him.

"Look," he said.

George looked out and an amazing sight met his gaze. Below him stretched a broad fertile valley wooded in spots and with many open spaces, while beyond appeared the river glistening in the early morning light.

"Say!" exclaimed George. "What a wonderful view!"

"Eet iss," agreed Pierre. "Eet iss also a gran' look-out place."

"We're right on the side of a hill you say?"

"Look up."

George leaned out and looked above him, twisting his body around and holding on to the bushes for support. Fifteen or twenty feet above his head was the top of the cliff, for it was a cliff as Pierre had said. Rocks, bare of earth and only sparsely covered by a few straggling bushes, rose in an almost perpendicular line.

"Now look down," said Pierre.

Rocks also appeared below, just like the one above and only a few narrow ledges here and there seemed to break their smooth surface.

"You said that in case we were attacked we could go out here," said George, turning to Pierre. "I don't see how any one could go down that cliff."

"But he can," smiled the trapper. "I have done eet."

"You know the path, do you?"

"But certainly. Eet iss hard but eet can be done."

"I should think it might be hard," smiled George grimly, and once again he leaned out and gazed down the steep hillside. Then he

allowed his glance to wander idly out over the valley, and the river, and the waving tree-tops, and the little green open spaces below. Suddenly he started violently and turned excitedly to Pierre.

"Look!" he cried. "There are men on horseback down there; they're Indians, too."

Before replying or coming to look, Pierre walked quietly across the cave to the place where his rifle stood; possessing himself of his gun he quickly rejoined his young companion.

"Where?" he asked.

"See?" exclaimed George, parting the branches of the bushes and pointing to a spot in the valley below. Almost directly beneath them and perhaps some three or four hundred yards distant, appeared a small band of horsemen.

"Ten of them," counted George, "all Indians but one. Do you see them?"

"Yes," said Pierre. "Who iss zat white man?"

"Why, I don't know," replied George. "Still he looks familiar. No, it couldn't be,—I believe it's Burch," he exclaimed suddenly, turning to Pierre.

"An' so I think also," muttered Pierre. "Zat viper!"

"What do you suppose he's doing with those Indians?"

"I cannot say," and Pierre slowly raised his rifle.

"You're not going to shoot him, are you?" demanded George in alarm.

"Perhaps."

"But they may be friendly Indians," protested George. "You can't shoot a man just because you suspect him of something. I don't even know what it is you think he has done. He may be bringing those Indians into Vincennes."

"Zose Indians are not friendly," said Pierre. He was carefully, almost lovingly, sighting his rifle, like a man who points an empty gun at a target.

"How do you know?"

"Zey are Shawnee, of Tecumseh's tribe, and I know zey are not friendly."

"Then what is Burch doing with them? Tell me what it is you suspect him of. Perhaps it isn't Burch after all. You know—"

Pierre's rifle suddenly spoke and whatever

it was that George had intended to say he left it unfinished. He leaned far out to see the result of the trapper's shot, everything else instantly forgotten. He saw the horse on which the white man was riding suddenly pitch forward to its knees, and send its rider sprawling upon the ground. The nine other members of the party, all of them Indians, quickly scattered in all directions, every one holding his gun ready for use and looking all about him in an effort to locate the spot whence the shot had come.

"You hit his horse," said George excitedly. "He's getting to his feet. Look at him go!" he exclaimed as the unseated rider arose from the ground and at top speed ran for the nearby trees. Before Pierre could reload he had gained their shelter.

"What's goin' on here?" demanded a hoarse voice, and George turned to see Dennis standing in the center of the cave, rifle in hand, glancing wildly all about him. His hair was tousled and his eyes still full of sleep, but he was ready to face whatever danger might present itself.

"What are you shooting at?" exclaimed

Alec who also had joined Dennis by this time. "Are we attacked?"

"A leetle target practice," smiled Pierre.

"Some Indians and a white man were riding by below," said George. "Pierre thought he recognized one of his friends and took a shot at him."

"A fine way t' treat yer friends," remarked Dennis dryly. "I hope yez hate me, Pierre."

"Who was it?" asked Alec.

"We thought it was Burch," replied George. "We weren't sure, though."

"Well, what would he be doing with a gang of Indians?" demanded Alec.

"I don't know," said George. "Pierre seems to think he knows, though he won't tell me just what he does think. We all suspected Burch you know, but we didn't know what we suspected him of. We just thought he acted queerly and did some peculiar things, but Pierre here has a real grudge against him."

"Tell us what it's all about, Pierre," urged Alec. The Frenchman was still peering earnestly down into the valley below and to all appearances had not been listening to the conversation.

"Zat Burch iss a snake!" he exclaimed shortly. Apparently he had heard what was said after all.

"Well, maybe he is," admitted Alec. "Tell us why you think so, though."

"Yes," urged George. "Of what do you suspect him?"

"Of zis," cried Pierre warmly, turning towards his questioners as he spoke. "I think zat man Burch—"

"Hist!" warned Dennis suddenly. "What was that?"

"What was what?"

"I thought I heard a noise."

"Where?" inquired George eagerly, and at the same time he possessed himself of his gun which stood near by.

"There," and as he spoke Dennis pointed to the narrow passageway through which they had entered the cave the night before. "It sounded like somewan had disturbed a loose stone an' made it fall down somewheres."

"We will soon find out," said Pierre quietly. "Come wiz me, George," he said and instantly he started towards the dark tunnel. "You two should stay here," he said to Alec and Dennis.

"Keep a sharp watch from zat ozzer entrance."

Close to Pierre's heels George followed and a moment later they entered the passageway.

"Hold ze rifle in one hand an' hold ze back of my coat wiz ze ozzer."

George did as Pierre directed, grasping his rifle with his right hand and holding onto the back of the big Frenchman's jacket with his left.

Slowly and carefully, step by step, they proceeded. Pierre knew his way well, but he used extreme care not to make a sound, and George, needless to say, did the same. Now and again they paused and listened with every nerve strained.

"Maybe Dennis he not hear after all," whispered Pierre finally.

"I haven't heard anything anyway," said George.

"Let us go to ze entrance however," said Pierre. "Eet iss best to be sure."

Again they continued their careful advance. It was pitchy dark and not the kind of work that any one unfamiliar with the path could relish. George found himself in a constant state of fear lest Pierre should make a false

step; he remembered the deep chasm they had walked around on their way in. After what seemed to the young frontiersman a long time, Pierre stopped again.

"Entrance right around ze corner," he whispered. "Be careful."

George merely grunted. He could not possibly be more careful than he had been. Creeping cautiously forward they turned the corner and ahead of them saw the entrance of the cave. The light filtered in, dimly lighting up the ceiling and walls of the strange passageway; outside appeared the great rock and a few dead branches of the fallen tree that guarded the doorway.

"I see no one," whispered George after a moment's silence.

"Nor I," agreed Pierre. "Zat Dennis he hear what iss not."

"Shall we sneak up there to the entrance and look around outside?"

"Come."

Progressing more rapidly now, but not less carefully, they picked their way over the ground, towards the patch of light ahead. They could see their path now and so advanced

more confidently. They felt sure that Dennis had heard nothing that need alarm them, but still they ran no risks and in silence moved forward, their moccasined feet making no sound on the damp earth that covered the floor of the cave.

Presently they reached the entrance, one on each side. Here they halted for a moment and then as Pierre stepped out carefully, George did likewise. As they emerged into the light of day, they both stood silent and still, rifles ready for instant use. On George's right hand was the big rock and over this he could not see unless he should walk a few yards farther from the entrance to the cave. This he determined to do, and stepped boldly forward towards the fallen tree trunk.

Suddenly he heard a warning cry from Pierre, and wheeling quickly was just in time to see a hideous, painted savage directly behind him, tomahawk in hand ready to strike. Almost without thinking he sprang backwards and the blow missed him by inches. At the same instant there was the sharp report of a rifle and the Indian fell dead at George's feet, a bullet through his head.

"Quick! Quick!" cried Pierre, and he darted within the cave, dragging his young companion with him. Nor were they an instant too soon, for as they disappeared within, a bullet flattened itself against the big rock behind them.

CHAPTER XIII

BESIEGED

PIERRE and George hurried over that part of the passageway which was lighted, not caring now how much noise they made. Coming to the first turn and darkness, Pierre crouched on one knee, pulling George down beside him. In this position they faced the entrance.

"Watch sharp," he cautioned. "I mus' reload."

"Did you shoot that Indian?" demanded George.

"Who else did?"

"You saved my life," said George humbly.

"Eet iss hard to see here," muttered Pierre, striving to change the subject. "You see nothing by ze entrance?"

"Not yet."

"Zey will not dare show zemselves zere."

"Not in the daylight I guess. Do you sup-

pose they are the same Indians we saw riding down in the valley a little while ago?"

"No. Zey would not have ze time to reach here so soon."

"Then there must be Indians all around here."

"No doubt," said Pierre calmly. "Ah, zat iss done," he sighed as he finished loading his rifle.

"Well, that's what we were sent out to find out about," exclaimed George. "How do you suppose they happened to be outside here?"

"Zey track us."

"They picked up the trail we made last night, you mean?"

"Yes. My cave iss secret no more."

"How'll we ever get out of here?"

"Have you forgot ze ozzer entrance so soon?"

"But," protested George, "we can't go down the side of that cliff in the daytime; why the Indians would see us sure. We'd look just like flies on a wall."

"How about ze night though?"

"Do you suppose any one could possibly find

his way down there at night? Why it would be suicide to try it even."

"Zen we are besieged," said Pierre, "and we have only food to las' t'ree days."

"You don't seem much worried about it," remarked George, somewhat irritated by the trapper's careless tone. All this time they kept their gaze fastened on the entrance.

"No," admitted Pierre. "I not worry."

"You think we can get out all right?"

"Yes."

"Suppose they try to rush this entrance."

"Zen zey all fall into ze pit," said Pierre calmly. "One man he can sit here and easy defend zis cave."

"Then why don't you go back to where Dennis and Alec are and let—"

The noise of Pierre's gun interrupted George's sentence and he saw a spurt of dirt kicked up by the ball alongside the big rock.

"Did you see an Indian?" he demanded excitedly.

"Zat is what I fire at."

"But I didn't see him."

"Mebbe not. I did."

Pierre's sharp eyes had detected the slight

movement of an arm outside the cave and he had wasted no time in firing at it.

"It iss well to let zem know we are awake," remarked Pierre soberly.

Many minutes passed and no further sign of their enemies was seen by the two watchers. Evidently the Indians had no desire to run the risk of showing themselves before the entrance.

"Perhaps they've gone," suggested George at length.

"Oh no," said Pierre confidently. "They not go."

"Do you think they'll wait for us to come out, no matter how long it may take to starve us?"

"I do. We will fool zem wiz zat ozzer entrance, though."

"What do you suppose has happened to Alec and Dennis?"

"I do not know."

"Perhaps they're worried about us; we've been gone a long time you know and hearing those rifle shots and all they may think we're dead."

"Zat iss so," agreed Pierre. "One of us should go and tell zem."

"I don't know the way."

"And one mus' stand watch."

"Which do you want me to do?"

"I will stay here."

"I'll have to have a light then," exclaimed George. "I couldn't possibly find my way in the dark."

"I will go wiz you till past zat hole," said Pierre. "Zen all it will be for you to do iss to hold your han' against ze wall."

"And that will lead me right into that room again?"

"It will." Pierre rose to his feet as he spoke. "Come," he said.

"But who will keep watch while we are both away?"

"No one. Zey will not come in here; zey do not dare."

Offering no further protest George allowed himself to be led back over the narrow and dangerous course. After a few moments Pierre stopped and directing George past him sent him on the way alone.

"Keep your han' on ze wall," he ordered. "You will have no trouble. I will go back an' watch."

"How are we going to relieve you?" demanded George.

"I will come for some one; do not worry about me."

George heard Pierre start back on his return journey. It was inky dark and he did not like the prospect of walking alone through that dangerous place. He put out his hand and felt the damp wall beside him. The contact reassured him somewhat and he began gingerly to pick his way along.

The floor was smooth under his feet and presently he gained in confidence and increased his pace. It was not so bad after all, he thought, and the prospect of obtaining some breakfast cheered him considerably; he had had no food thus far that day. His mind was full of such thoughts and he also rehearsed the tale he would tell to Alec and Dennis about his and Pierre's adventures that morning.

Suddenly, however, his thoughts received a rude shock. All at once he felt himself locked in strong arms, his rifle was torn from his hand, and he was thrown heavily to the earth. Taken completely off his guard he was unable to offer much resistance at first. His assailant was

powerful and as George felt a huge hand reaching for his throat he realized that he was in a desperate situation.

He could not see his opponent or know what weapons he had with which to fight, but he knew that if he was to save his own life it must be by the use of his bare hands. His enemy had all the advantage of the first assault and as George fell, his assailant was on top. He could feel the great knotted fingers closing on his throat; he strove to cry out but his breath was shut off and no sound issued.

George was not daunted, however. He knew his plight was desperate, but he did not give up. He exerted every ounce of strength he possessed and strove mightily to shake off that torturing hold from his throat. Perhaps his enemy had a tomahawk already upraised, ready to strike. Where were Alec and Dennis? How had this Indian come to be in that place? Did it mean that his two comrades had been surprised, overpowered, and perhaps murdered?

The thought gave him abnormal strength and with a supreme effort he shook loose that fiendish grip. Gasping and choking, he struggled to his feet, hurling his opponent from him.

"Alec! Dennis!" he cried. "Help!"

"Is it you, George?" demanded a hoarse voice, coming from a spot almost at his feet.

"Dennis!" exclaimed George.

"An' I tryin' t' murder ye," groaned Dennis, for it was none other than the young Irishman who had attacked him.

"Well, why were you?" demanded George, his surprise now rapidly changing to anger. "What did you think you were doing anyway?"

"Alec an' me thought you was dead, you an' Pierre," Dennis explained, still breathing hard. "We heard ye firin' off thim guns an' whin ye didn't come back we was sure ye was dead."

"And you were going to find out for sure, I suppose," said George. "Is that what you were doing in this tunnel?"

"It was. I was on me way t' look fer ye, whin I heard somewan comin'."

"What made you think I was an Indian?"

"Ye come along so stealthy like. I was shure ye was wan o' thim bloody rid divils, an' I made up me mind t' finish ye."

"Why didn't you hit me over the head with your rifle, or shoot me? I'm certainly glad

you didn't, though," said George with a sigh.

"I was afraid I'd miss ye," explained Dennis. "I thought that with me two hands I could take care o' any Injin what I iver saw, an' so I decided that was th' best way."

"Well you nearly finished me all right," said George, ruefully feeling his throat. "I forgive you though and I say we get out of this darkness and go and find Alec."

They proceeded carefully back to the room where they had slept the night before and there found Alec very glad to see them.

"Well, George," he exclaimed, "where's Pierre, and what do you mean by giving Dennis and me such a scare?"

The story was quickly told. In spite of the fact that George told his two friends how confident Pierre was that they could easily make their escape down the cliff, Alec and Dennis were not convinced. Nor was George; he was frankly worried over their plight and was free to express his opinion.

"It looks bad to me," he exclaimed.

"Well, it looks the same way to us," Alec agreed, shaking his head.

"Unless Pierre knows some way down that

cliff that we don't," said Dennis who always tried to see the bright side of things.

"It's not like him to be so confident unless he is pretty sure of himself," remarked George.

"Well, I hope he's right," exclaimed Alec. "Let's try not to worry unless we have to anyway. Want some breakfast, George?"

"I certainly do," cried George eagerly. "I'm nearly starved."

"We'll soon fix that," said Dennis, and he produced a share of the scanty store of food that they still possessed. George wasted no time in appeasing his hunger, and when he was satisfied approached the opening in the cliff where Alec and Dennis were standing.

"It looks peaceful enough down there on the valley," he remarked gazing out across the country spread at their feet.

"Yis, but th' woods is no doubt full o' thim Injins," exclaimed Dennis grimly. "I'd like t' git me hands on thim."

"Well, all you have to do is to go out where Pierre is and walk out the entrance to this cave," said Alec. "You'll find plenty of Indians out around there I reckon."

"Yis, but I couldn't get me hands on thim."

"Why not?" demanded George.

"Because they'd all run."

"Run from you?" exclaimed George. "A great chance of that I guess!"

"Did I say they'd run from me?"

"You said they'd run. If you didn't mean that they'd run from you, what do you mean? Stop talking in riddles."

"I said I wouldn't be able t' git me hands on thim because they'd run, an' that's what I mean. They'd run fast too, but not half so fast as Dinnis. They'd nivir catch me neyther."

"Oh," laughed George, "you mean you'd run from them?"

"I do that. What could wan poor man like me do ag'inst all thim bloodthirsty savages?"

"Beat them in a running race, I guess," smiled George.

"I could that," exclaimed Dennis grimly. "An' if they nivir got their hands on me I guess I wouldn't git mine on thim."

"Well, I think you two are crazy to stand there and talk a lot of nonsense like that," said Alec. "What do you—"

He suddenly stopped speaking. "Do either of you smell smoke?" he inquired.

George and Dennis sniffed the air. "I do," exclaimed George. "Where is it coming from?"

"Look," said Alec, pointing across the room. Out from the dark passage leading to the other entrance of the cave floated a thin wisp of smoke.

"Now where is that comin' from?" exclaimed Dennis anxiously.

"You don't suppose Pierre has built a fire, do you?" demanded George.

"No chance of that," said Alec firmly. "We must find out about this," and he started to walk towards the spot whence the smoke issued.

Halfway across the room he halted suddenly. Echoing and resounding through the cave came the sound of a rifle shot.

CHAPTER XIV

THE INDIANS' STRATEGY

THE three comrades looked at one another in alarm. What was the meaning of the strange smoke and the rifle shot?

"Pierre may be in trouble and need our help," exclaimed George. "We'd better go to him."

"If we can find our way," said Alec doubtfully.

"Can't we light a torch?" demanded George.

"An' show th' Injins just where to shoot I suppose," said Dennis scornfully.

"That's true," George admitted. "What can we do?"

"We must risk it, that's all," exclaimed Alec. "I'm going."

He started for the passageway, but before he could reach it Pierre appeared from out the gloom. More and more smoke was now pour-

ing forth, and the big Frenchman rubbed his smarting eyes.

"What is it, Pierre? What's the matter?" demanded Alec eagerly.

"Ze Indians," exclaimed Pierre. "Zey build a fire in ze entrance of ze cave and zey try to smoke us out."

"How can they do that?" questioned George. "I should think that the minute they showed themselves at the entrance you could shoot them."

"But zey do not show zemselves."

"Then how do they keep the fire going?"

"Zey have sticks covered wiz pitch; zey light zem an' throw zem down at ze entrance. Zen zey throw on more wood an' ze win' eet blow ze smoke into ze cave. Oh, eet iss bad," and Pierre dug his knuckles into his eyes which still stung and smarted.

"And you can't see them at all?" inquired Alec.

"No."

"This is serious. Just look, more and more smoke is pouring through all the time too. What shall we do?"

"I say t' charge th' bloody rascals," exclaimed Dennis valiantly.

"You don't know how many of them there are," said George. "As soon as we show ourselves outside they can pick us off. I don't think your plan is a very good one."

"I don't, nayther," agreed Dennis. "We can't stay here an' git smoked out like a lot o' woodchucks, though."

"Who fired that gun we heard a few minutes ago, Pierre?" asked Alec.

"I did," said Pierre.

"I thought you said you couldn't see any Indians."

"I couldn't; I shoot at ze fire."

"To try to scatter it I suppose?" said George.

"Yes, but eet was no use."

"Whew! this smoke is getting pretty thick," observed Alec, beginning to cough. He walked over to the opening and looked out.

"Do ye see any Injins out there?" asked Dennis.

"Not one."

"Well, they'll soon see us."

"Why will they?"

"Don't ye know that all this smoke is begin-

ning t' pour out o' that intrince? Don't ye suppose thim Injins will see it?"

"I not think of zat," exclaimed Pierre suddenly. "Eet iss best zat we get away from here."

"That's right," agreed Alec. "Those Indians will see that smoke as sure as fate; probably they've seen it already."

"Do you think they'll post scouts around on this side?" asked George.

"No doubt of it," said Alec. "They don't miss anything."

"Can we go down the cliff now, Pierre?"

"Yes, but eet iss dangerous."

"Because the Indians will see us?"

"Yes."

"We've got to get out of here though," observed Alec. "Outside there is a chance for us to get away from the Indians, but in here we don't stand any chance at all. We'll all choke to death in an hour."

The smoke now poured forth in dense clouds; it was full of the smell of pitch, and strangled and choked all who breathed it. A strong draught sucked it out of the passageway into the big room, where it hung low, and circling around

made the four scouts' position most uncomfortable, and promised soon to render it dangerous.

"When we do get down to the bottom of the cliff we'll have a hard time hiding from the Indians," remarked George. "The woods down there must be full of them."

"Don't worry about that part till ye are sure we'll reach th' bottom o' th' cliff," observed Dennis soberly. "I'm not so positive we'll do that."

"We must go," observed Pierre at that moment. "Zis smoke eet will soon be so t'ick we shall choke. Come."

"Take what food you can carry easily," directed Alec. "We may need all we've got, you know."

Precious rifles in hand the four scouts soon made ready to leave that dangerous spot. It might be that they were bound for one even more dangerous, but that was the risk they had to run. Pierre led the way, and parting the bushes that grew around the entrance he climbed out.

"Careful," he warned. "Zis iss dangerous."

He stood on a narrow ledge, partially screened by the bushes, and waited for his three companions to join him. When the little band was together once more they crouched low behind the bushes, and peered out across the valley, and then glanced sharply about them in all directions.

"If Major White could see us now!" whispered Dennis. "I guess he'd think we was scoutin' all right."

"Ssh!" hissed Pierre sharply.

In absolute silence they waited. Finally Pierre began to move forward along the ledge, slowly and cautiously, and motioned for his three companions to follow him. In single file they proceeded.

It was precarious work; the footing was treacherous and the path was narrow and most of the time they were within full view of the valley below. No one knew how many hostile Indians might be watching them from some point of vantage and perhaps even waiting to ambush them when they had made the descent.

"They'll see us sure, Pierre," exclaimed Alec finally. He was just behind the Frenchman and was very anxious. The path they

were following apparently kept on indefinitely and seemed to lead nowhere.

"Have patience," cautioned Pierre. "I know where eet iss I go."

The narrow ledge turned around a sharp corner and melted away into the face of the cliff. Apparently there was no choice but to turn back. Pierre, however, did not hesitate; handing his gun to Alec he began to let himself down over the side of the cliff.

"Where's he going?" exclaimed George in amazement.

"Zere are steps cut in ze side here," said Pierre. He placed his feet carefully in a niche and grasping a jutting piece of rock quickly descended to another ledge some six or eight feet below.

"My gun," he exclaimed to Alec, who quickly handed down the rifle.

"An' how does th' last wan git his gun?" demanded Dennis. "There'll be no wan t' hand it to him."

"Perhaps Pierre will take them all now, and wait for us," George suggested.

"I nivir thought of that," said Dennis sheepishly. "I must be losin' me mind."

The three remaining rifles were passed down to Pierre, who thereupon moved a short distance along the ledge and waited for the others to join him. This they did in a short time and the procession was continued, this time in the opposite direction from that which they formerly had taken. The narrow pathway sloped gently downward, and about fifty yards ahead of them appeared a broken and jumbled mass of rocks strewn over the face of the cliff all the way down to the valley below.

"Looks as if somewan had pushed off part o' th' cliff an' broken it," remarked Dennis. "There must have been a big slide whin thim fell."

"We go down over them, I suppose," said George.

"Well thin, we're liable t' slide oursilves," said Dennis. "I hope th' seat o' me breeches will stand th' strain."

Pierre and Alec, the older members of the little party, had no time to joke, however. They kept a sharp watch over all of the surrounding valley, and were in constant fear that some band of hostile Indians would suddenly appear and cut them off from their escape.

Soon they came to the rocks and began to climb over them and slide down the other side, and then repeat the performance. It was hard work and as they came closer and closer to the bottom they used ever-increasing caution. Suddenly a muffled exclamation from Pierre brought the little party to a halt; every member lay still as a statue, striving to make himself as inconspicuous as possible against the rock.

"What is it, Pierre?" whispered Alec.

"Indians," said Pierre. "Over by zose trees."

Moving their heads carefully and slowly his three companions finally discovered the cause of Pierre's alarm. In front of a clump of trees about a half-mile distant were two Indians on horseback. Side by side they sat and one of them raised his arm and pointed in the direction of the cliff.

"What's he p'intin' at?" demanded Dennis. "Does he see us?"

"He see ze smoke," said Pierre.

Over their heads the smoke poured out of the entrance to the cave in a steadily increasing volume. In dense clouds it issued, seemingly

from the face of the cliff itself and no wonder the Indians had stopped to point at it.

"They'll be over here to investigate pretty soon," George surmised.

"Unless they're of the same band that started the fire at the other entrance," said Alec.

"In that case I should think they'd be all the more apt to come over here," said George. "They'll see that there is another entrance from the one they guarded and they'll want to find out about it."

"They'll be over here; that's the main p'int," said Dennis.

"Zey will," agreed Pierre.

"What'll we do then?" demanded George.

"Don't ye think four of us can handle two o' thim bloody rascals?" exclaimed Dennis in disgust. "I'm ashamed o' ye."

"Suppose they bring a dozen more with them," George suggested.

"That's differint," admitted Dennis soberly. "Howivir, we'll let thim know they was in a scrap before we quit."

"I wish we had horses," muttered Alec.

"Go wan," exclaimed Dennis. "I'd rather be murdered."

"Zey go away," said Pierre suddenly.

True enough the two Indians all at once started their horses and quickly disappeared around a corner of the little patch of trees.

"Now's our chanst," said Dennis eagerly. "We can reach the woods before they come back."

"Well, I guess we cannot," exclaimed Alec shortly. "In the first place it must be nearly a mile to the main woods, and in the second place I believe those Indians will be back before we can reach shelter."

"An' so I think too," said Pierre.

"Why do ye?" inquired Dennis.

"No Indian would let a thing like that smoke up there go by without finding out all about it," said Alec confidently. "They've gone for help."

"An' I s'pose we will sit here on this rock like a lot of turtles on a log, an' wait for thim t' come an' lift our scalps," remarked Dennis grimly. "A fine plan I think."

"We will not," said Pierre. "Eet iss here we will stay," and he proceeded to crawl down

from the big flat rock upon which they were seated. At one side and just below them was a place some ten feet square, surrounded on all sides by the huge rocks. It formed a natural pocket in which any one could hide and escape detection from all directions except from above.

"This is a great place to hide," exclaimed George enthusiastically when they had all gained this refuge. "Unless the Indians come right to the spot, or manage to find their way through this entrance in the cave they'll never see us here."

"An' we can see nothing nayther," remarked Dennis.

"Can't some one stand on a stone and look over the top?"

"An' his head will be in plain sight."

"I can fix zat," exclaimed Pierre. He took two large stones which lay at the bottom of their hiding place and lifted them to the top of the rocks on the side facing the valley. The barrier was about six feet high there and he had to stretch to place the stones in position, for they were about the size of his head and consequently were heavy.

"I don't see th' idea," remarked Dennis curiously as he watched the Frenchman at work.

The stones were placed side by side and perhaps two inches apart. Then Pierre brought two other big stones and placed them on the ground directly below the ones on top of the rock. Standing on these stone footstools his head reached a little higher than the level of the rock but not so high as to be visible above the two stones.

"Ye stand an' look out between th' two stones; is that it?" exclaimed Dennis, suddenly realizing what Pierre was driving at.

"Eet iss," said Pierre. "I can see zem, but zey not see me."

"Well, we ought to have a lookout there all the time," said Alec. "Suppose we take turns, and I'll start if you say so."

"When night comes we'll sneak out of here and try to get back to camp, I suppose," remarked George.

"We certainly ought to try to get away from here," observed Alec as he took his place on the stones and gazed out across the valley.

For an hour Alec stood guard, while the

three other members of the band sat well screened in the "pocket" or lay down and tried to rest. A bed of stones is not the softest resting place in the world, however, and even these hardy frontiersmen were unable to make themselves comfortable. They watched the smoke which still poured from the cave in dense clouds and wondered why the Indians did not return to investigate as they had expected them to do.

"They probably think we're all dead by this time," said George.

"If ony o' thim will only show their faces we'll soon prove that we're not dead," exclaimed Dennis. "I wisht we had run f'r the woods."

Pierre did not condescend to reply to this criticism of his plan of campaign. He sat silent and thoughtful, gazing dreamily up at the smoke which meant that the secret of his cave was no longer his. At the end of an hour he relieved Alec, and when his time had elapsed George took his place. The third hour passed and still there were no signs of the Indians. It was mid-afternoon when Dennis went on duty.

He had stood on the stones and gazed across

the valley scarcely five minutes, when he suddenly turned to the others.

"Hist," he whispered hoarsely. "Here they come."

CHAPTER XV

A LIVELY SKIRMISH

UPON receipt of this startling news the first thing that every one did was to look at the priming of his gun. It was no time to have a misfire when the Indians were attacking.

"How many of them are there?" demanded Alec.

"Hundrids," said Dennis. "I can't see thim all yit."

"Are they coming out of the woods?"

"Around that corner where thim other two wint."

"Are they on foot or horseback?" asked George excitedly.

"Horseback."

"Let me see zem," said Pierre quietly, and at once Dennis yielded his observation post to the Frenchman.

"Zere iss a beeg party of zem," said Pierre after a moment.

"Dennis said there were hundreds," remarked George hopefully—hopefully because he hoped Dennis would be shown to be wrong.

Pierre counted slowly. "Zere are forty-seex," he said at last.

"Coming this way?"

"Yes."

"Can't we put another stone up there?" inquired Dennis. "Then, two of us could see and two shoot whin th' time comes."

"Zey would see eet sure," said Pierre. "Also I hope ze time will not come when we have to shoot."

"Suppose they come and climb right up over these rocks?" exclaimed Alec. "I guess we'd have to shoot then, wouldn't we?"

"Yes," admitted Pierre, "but let us hope zey will not do zat."

"How far away are they?"

"Maybe one quarter of a mile."

"May I see for a second?"

"And after you I'd like to take just one look," said George eagerly. "If we've got to fight I'd like to know who our opponents are."

Pierre yielded his place to Alec, who after a moment, in turn gave way to George. Everyone took great care that the rocks on which he stood should not be disturbed nor make any sound which might be heard by the sharp-eared redskins. His heart beating wildly, George peered out.

A long line of ponies stretched out across the plain, and on the back of every one was an Indian. They were scarcely three hundred yards distant now. George could see the hideous war paint, and at the sight the cold shivers ran up and down his spine.

"You don't see Burch wit' thim, do ye?" whispered Dennis.

George had forgotten Burch. Was it only yesterday that Pierre had fired at the horseman in the valley below? So much had occurred since that time it seemed years ago. Was it really Burch at whom he had fired? What did he suspect him of? What would Burch, a peaceful citizen of Vincennes, be doing with a band of hostile redmen? Pierre was crazy on the subject, he decided. All these thoughts flashed through his mind in the space of a second, and he dismissed them instantly. This

was no time to be wondering about the foolish suspicions of a French trapper.

"There are no white men there at all," he replied.

"Don't you think you'd better let Pierre get up there?" suggested Alec.

"Yes," agreed George at once. He stepped down and Pierre took his place.

"I thought Pierre was the one to keep a look-out and tell us what to do," explained Alec in a low voice. "He knows more than the rest of us."

"Of course he does," said George. "He's the man to be there."

"Zey come nearer," whispered Pierre after a moment. His three comrades took a stronger grip on their rifles and set their jaws tighter. The sound of the ponies' hoofs came faintly to their ears.

"Zey stop," whispered Pierre. "Zey are but one hundred yards away now."

"The rid divils!" muttered Dennis. "We'll show 'em!"

The Indians sat in silence and gazed curiously at the smoke pouring from the cave. Finally one of the chiefs, a big broad-

shouldered man, and straight as an arrow, turned to the others. He wore a headdress of eagles' feathers and was apparently possessed of authority. He spoke a few words in low guttural tones and six men speedily rode a few steps forward. There they halted while the others wheeled their ponies, and rode swiftly off across the valley.

"All go 'way, but seex," whispered Pierre.

"What do you suppose they're up to?" queried George in a low voice.

"Dunno," returned Alec shortly.

"What are the six doing, Pierre?" whispered George.

For answer the trapper merely put his finger to his lips.

Minutes that seemed like hours passed. The muffled sound of the forty ponies' hoofs died away in the distance and all became still. Silence reigned in the cavern in the rocks where Alec, George and Dennis stood with eyes riveted on Pierre.

"Zey get off zere horses," whispered Pierre suddenly.

"Let 'em come!" muttered Dennis fiercely. "We'll fix thim."

"Zey come zis way," announced Pierre a moment later. He turned and glanced in the direction of the smoke above them; whether or not it was instinct that caused him to do so is hard to say, but at any rate it was a most fortunate move.

His three comrades saw the expression of his face suddenly change. He stepped down quickly from the two rocks on which he was standing and still looking up at the face of the cliff began slowly to raise his gun. His companions glanced behind them to discover the reason for these strange actions and what they saw was two Indians standing outlined against the sky on top of the cliff directly above the entrance to the cave.

"We're trapped," exclaimed Alec in a tense voice.

"Do they see us yet?" whispered George.

"They do not," retorted Alec and as he spoke one of the Indians suddenly pointed down at the hiding-place of the four scouts below and then strove to jump back from sight and pull his companion with him. He was too late, however. There was a sharp report from Pierre's gun and the unlucky brave fell for-

ward to his knees; he clutched wildly at bits of grass and at bushes in an effort to save himself, but to no avail. Struggling convulsively he slid over the edge of the cliff and a moment later came hurtling down through mid-air; his body struck the top of a near-by rock with a report that could have been heard a half-mile away.

"They'll all be after us now," cried Alec. "We're done for."

"Keep watch on zat cliff," ordered Pierre curtly. "Give me zat gun," and he snatched Alec's rifle from his hand. Springing back to his former place on the rocks he leveled the rifle and fired at one of the six Indians in the valley. They had seen their comrade suddenly pitch downward to his death and for a moment had stood amazed at the unexpected event. Whence had come the bullet anyway? True the smoke had curled up from Pierre's gun, but almost before it was visible he had taken aim at one of them with Alec's rifle.

Scarcely had the noise of the report died away when what had once been a proud and haughty brave, lay in a huddled heap upon the prairie.

"Take my gun, Pierre," urged George excitedly.

The five remaining Indians turned and sprang for their ponies, but Pierre was too quick for them. There was a sharp bark from George's rifle and another lay alongside his comrade.

"Give him your gun, Dennis," cried George, already engaged in reloading one of the empty rifles.

"Watch zat cliff!" reminded Pierre as he grasped the proffered gun, and aimed it at one of the four remaining Indians. Their ponies, startled by the firing, had snorted and started off. Consequently the Indians were having a hard time in mounting and soon another fell a victim to the Frenchman's deadly aim.

George and Dennis were feverishly engaged in reloading the empty guns and presently another was placed in Pierre's hands. The Indians, however, had caught their ponies by this time and were racing madly off across the plain. Their one idea seemed to be to escape the hidden marksman who fired so frequently and with such unerring accuracy. Pierre's last shot went wild.

"Any more up ze cliff?" he demanded, turning his head for the first time.

"None in sight," replied Alec, who had kept his gaze steadily fixed in that direction.

"We get out zen," exclaimed Pierre quickly. "Load ze guns and come."

"We certainly will," agreed Dennis heartily. "They'll be swarmin' around here like bees prisintly."

It was the work of but a moment to load the empty guns, and without any delay the four scouts clambered up over the rocks and started to run across the valley. A half-mile ahead of them were the woods and to reach their shelter and protection was the one idea of the little band.

With hardly a backward look they passed the three stark forms lying on the ground at the base of the cliff. The riderless ponies browsed some distance away, but no attention was paid them. Now and again one of the four fugitives threw a quick glance over his shoulder at the top of the cliff behind them.

Thus far no Indians had appeared, but far off down the valley could be seen the forms of three galloping horsemen. It was a certainty

that soon the remainder of the large band of braves would return to avenge their dead comrades, and when they did it would fare ill with any one who might fall into their hands.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MAN OF MYSTERY

NEARER and nearer came the four scouts to the woods. If only they could reach the shelter of the forest the first dangerous part of their journey would be over.

"Maybe there are Indians hiding in the edge of the woods waiting for us," puffed Alec, whose wind was not as good as it once was.

"We must risk zat," returned Pierre.

"Yis," panted Dennis. "I wouldn't stop now f'r Tecumseh himsilf."

At a jog trot they plodded along and soon were only a hundred yards from their destination. All four of the fugitives kept a sharp lookout in all directions in order to guard against surprise if possible. It was not a comfortable feeling to know that while they were out in the open and in plain view their enemies might be calmly waiting for them to draw a bit nearer so that they could be sure of their aim.

Suddenly Pierre halted. He threw himself prone on the ground and called to the others to do the same. "A horse iss coming," he whispered.

From the woods came the sound of a horse's hoofs and the four scouts kept their rifles pointed in the direction whence the noise came. All at once the horseman appeared, riding swiftly towards them.

Dennis uttered a low exclamation and sprang to his feet. " 'Tis Burch!" he cried in amazement.

His three companions instantly recognized the rider as Arnold Burch, and quickly rose from the ground. Apparently he was alone for no one else appeared and it was soon evident that he was as much surprised to see the four scouts as they were to see him. George heard a muffled exclamation from Pierre as they gathered around the horse now brought to an abrupt halt by its rider. Burch eyed the four friends coldly and said nothing.

"Well," exclaimed Alec, "what are you doing here?"

"Is that any of your business?" demanded Burch.

"Alec," exclaimed Dennis hotly, "if I was you I'd bash his bloomin' head f'r 'im."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't either," retorted Burch, and clapping spurs to his horse he endeavored to ride away.

Pierre, however, was too quick for him and grasping the horse by its bridle he held on sturdily. "Oh, no you don't," he said calmly.

"What are you trying to do?" demanded Burch. "Let me go! I have important business and I advise you not to delay me."

"Where are you going?" asked Pierre.

"I'm on a mission for Governor Harrison and you'd better let me pass."

"Are you going up zis valley?"

"Yes, I'm going up *zis* valley," mimicked Burch.

Pierre, however, gave no sign that he was conscious of the insult. "Do you know zat ze valley iss full of Indians?" he inquired.

"Suppose it is. I've got to go just the same."

"Eet iss very dangerous. Mebbe you better take some ozzer way."

"I'm no coward," said Burch coldly.

"No, I think zat you are a liar," said Pierre quietly.

"Let me go!" exclaimed Burch. "I'll report you to Governor Harrison if you don't, and besides you'll have every Indian in the country at our throats if you don't get away from here."

"Ye jist said je didn't moind Injins," said Dennis. "Take a look around, George, me boy, an' see if ye see ony o' thim."

"None in sight," George reported.

"What are ye plannin' t' do with this rascal, Pierre?" inquired Dennis.

Burch bit his lip nervously and his face showed plainly that he was worried. He glanced hurriedly up and down the valley.

"See any Indians?" asked Alec sarcastically.

"Only dead ones I guess," said Dennis grimly.

"Who killed them?" inquired Burch quickly.

"Ask him is it ony o' his business, Alec," Dennis advised.

Burch flushed angrily at this remark, and then turned to Pierre. "Are you going to let me go, or not?" he demanded. "As sure as I

sit here I'll report you at headquarters if you don't."

"What headquarters?" asked Pierre quietly.

"What ones do you think?" Burch almost shouted.

"Zat iss what I ask you."

"Governor Harrison's, of course. Let me go, I say."

"Perhaps he's telling the truth, Pierre," said George. "We'd better let him go."

Pierre plainly wavered, but seemed loath to release the horse. "Mebbe so," he admitted skeptically. "Shall I let heem go?"

"Let him go an' maybe he'll git kilt," suggested Dennis. "Ony man with manners so bad as his should git shot."

"Very well," agreed Pierre. "But I warn you, Burch," he added fiercely, "zat if I find you have not told us ze truth I will surely kill you."

Burch sat in silence, making no reply to this threat.

"You hear zat?" demanded Pierre.

"Yes," he answered curtly.

"Well, zen remember eet," and Pierre took

his hand off the bridle. Instantly Burch dug his spurs into his mount and a moment later was galloping furiously up the valley.

The four scouts stood and watched him in silence for a few moments and then Pierre turned to the others. "Come," he urged. "We must go."

"What d' ye think o' that fellow?" demanded Dennis, as they resumed their course. "He's a queer one all right."

"I wonder if he was the man you fired at from the cave, Pierre," exclaimed George. "It certainly looked like him."

"What would he be doing with a lot of Indians?" queried Alec.

"That's just what I'd like to know," said George. "What do you think about it, Pierre?"

The trapper stopped for a moment and was gazing fixedly up the valley. His jaw was set firmly and his eyes narrowed, as he peered out through the half-shut lids. Far in the distance could be seen the figure of Burch rapidly disappearing from view. Pierre turned away with a sigh, glanced about him and once again was the alert scout of a few moments before;

it seemed as if he had shaken himself out of a trance.

"We must not stay out in ze open like zis," he said suddenly. "Eet iss dangerous."

Far behind them appeared the cliff whose steep side they had descended but a short time before. The smoke still poured from the entrance to the cave and curled dreamily upward, outlined against the sinking sun. No Indians were to be seen as the four scouts turned for one last look just before they entered the woods. The whole region appeared to be happy and peaceful and to reflect the quiet of the early autumn day; it did not seem possible that that afternoon men had been killed in that same valley.

As the little band were entering the forest, however, there suddenly came to their ears the report of a rifle and a bullet whined close over their heads.

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE FOREST

"SPREAD out!" cried Alec, and separating immediately the four scouts ran forward, farther into the woods.

A short distance ahead was a large fallen tree and behind this the little party was soon established. Resting their rifles on the log they peered eagerly through the trees to discover, if possible, whence the shot had come.

"You look ze ozzer way too, George," instructed Pierre. "Zey may be all around us."

The woods were open here, that is the spaces between the trees were quite large and there was but little underbrush. It did not seem possible that an enemy could conceal himself effectively here, but at the same time it also meant that none of the four fugitives could be well hidden either.

"If I see wan shall I pot him?" whispered Dennis.

"But certainly," replied Pierre. "Eet iss our life or theirs."

Many minutes passed and no sign of an Indian appeared. A gray squirrel came cautiously down the trunk of a nearby tree, flicking his bushy tail and looking inquiringly around him with bright beady eyes. A jay flew overhead alighting on an overhanging branch where he shrieked raucously and told all the news, gossip that he was. The forest apparently had resumed its normal life and it seemed incredible that there could be human beings there waiting for an opportunity to take one another's lives.

Suddenly Dennis uttered a slight grunt and took a tighter grip on his rifle. He peered intently in the direction of a low-growing bush in front of their position and kept his finger lightly on the trigger. Not once did he relax his gaze for an instant. Tense and nerved for action he remained motionless for some moments and then he suddenly fired.

Behind the bush there was a noise as if some one had fallen and then all was still.

"I fixed him," muttered Dennis grimly.

"An Indian?" queried George.

"Did ye t'ink it was a frog?"

The noise of the gun died away and silence once more covered the forest with its blanket. The bluejay scolded louder than ever, and the gray squirrel peered from the hole in the tree where the shot had driven him. He even debated whether or not it was safe for him to venture forth again. Minute after minute passed.

"I'm goin' t' move," announced Dennis finally.

"You'll get shot the second you show your head," George protested.

"Did ye see any Injins behind us?"

"None at all."

"An' there is none this way either. We can't stay here forivir, can we, Pierre?"

"No," Pierre admitted.

"Don't ye think we'd better move?"

"Perhaps, yes."

"Come on, thin," and Dennis rose boldly to his feet as he spoke.

Nothing happened as a result of this move on his part and soon his three companions joined him. They stole forward cautiously to the bush, and two going around it from each side

they advanced. Lying face downward on the ground on the other side was the body of an Indian. He was stone dead, a bullet through his temple. Dennis turned him over and the hideous war paint that covered his face was exposed to view.

"A Shawnee," announced Pierre.

"You tell by his paint?" inquired George.

"Yes."

"How'd you happen to see him, Dennis?" asked Alec.

"I see something movin' an' after watchin' f'r some time I decided it must be wan o' thim Injins. No animal would have gone so slow an' if 'twas a white man he would have showed himself."

"Do you suppose he was the one who fired at us?" said George.

"Probably," replied Alec. "If we don't move out of here we'll be fired on again too. We may not get off so lucky next time."

"You plan to go right back to Vincennes, Pierre?"

"We should."

"What can we report to Major White?"

"What we have seen."

"He sent us out to investigate a big band of Indians supposed to be operating near here," said George. "All we have seen is one party of about fifty."

"Well, wouldn't you say the country was swarmin' with them?" Alec demanded. "It seems to me we can truthfully report that."

"Hist!" cautioned Dennis suddenly. "Lie down, all o' ye."

On the frontier no one ever questioned an order like that; to delay, perhaps only for a second, and demand the reason might have meant death. As one man the four scouts dropped to the ground and lay still.

"What is it, Dennis?" whispered George a few moments later.

"Injins. I seen thim through the trees."

"I hear ze horses' hoofs," said Pierre softly. "Come, we will see."

He began to worm his way forward towards the edge of the forest. His three comrades accompanied him and gradually they approached the open plain. Luckily the woods did not extend for more than fifty yards from the spot where Dennis had shot the Indian, so it did not take long for the four scouts to cover

that distance. About ten yards from the edge of the trees the advance halted and screened by a clump of bushes the members of the little band were able to command a clear view of the valley without being in sight themselves. The sight that met their gaze was a strange one.

The sun was low in the western sky and its rays shone full into the eyes of the four scouts. Holding their hands up to keep out the glare they peered out and saw something that made them catch their breath. Strung out in a long line was a band of Indians, on horseback, and traveling swiftly up the valley in the same direction that Burch had gone a short time before.

"What a target!" whispered George. The Indians outlined clearly against the setting sun offered very tempting marks indeed. They were scarcely one hundred yards distant.

"Shall I shoot wan f'r ye?" questioned Dennis.

"Don't be a fool," muttered Alec fiercely. "Do you want to have them all after us?"

"Count zem," whispered Pierre. "Zat iss ze important thing."

"Some have passed on out of sight," said George in a low voice.

"Count the rest then," suggested Alec testily. His naturally sharp tongue seemed to be getting sharper every day, though he never meant any real harm by his remarks. They did not bother his friends at all.

Their ponies traveling at a swift trot, the Indians swept past. Apparently they had some definite object in mind and were in a hurry to reach it. Dozens of them moved by, their painted bodies glistening in the rays of the sun. Finally the last one disappeared from sight and the valley resumed its quiet and peaceful look once more. Night was falling fast.

"Well," remarked Alec finally, "that looks like all of them."

"How many did you count?" asked George.

"Seventy-nine."

"I counted eighty-wan," said Dennis.

"And I eighty-three," said Pierre.

"How about you?" Alec asked of George.

"Eighty-one."

"That must be right," exclaimed Dennis tri-

umphantly, "because that's what I counted mesilf."

"Call it eighty," exclaimed George, "and at that we didn't see them all."

"Suppose there were twenty we missed," said Alec. "With those we saw earlier in the day that would make a pretty good-sized party."

"One hundred an' fifty Injins," mused Dennis.

"We have something to report now, eh?" demanded Pierre.

"Yes, and we'd better get back and do it just as soon as we can, I think," remarked Alec. "What's your opinion, Pierre?"

"We should go back," agreed the trapper. "Eet will be ver' hard for us to reach Vincennes tonight zough."

"I should think night would be the best time for us to travel," said George. "If this country is as full of Indians, as it seems to be, we'll surely be seen if we start back in daylight."

"True," admitted Pierre. "Can we see to go through ze forest in ze dark?"

"I'm afraid I can't," said Dennis. "I'd break me head sure."

"Well, if you didn't do it yourself, some Indian would do it for you," exclaimed Alec. "A feller that makes as much noise as you do wouldn't stand very much chance."

"Is that so?" began Dennis angrily. "Just th' same I can—"

"Do not argue," said Pierre. "Let us go."

"I thought you weren't going to travel at night?" said George.

"Well, it isn't night yet, is it?" queried Alec. "You just leave it to Pierre, and he'll do the right thing all right."

"I'm willing," agreed George cheerfully. "Lead on, Pierre."

CHAPTER XVIII

AN ADVENTURE

UNTIL darkness made it impossible for them to travel farther, the four scouts advanced through the woods. In dead silence they went now, every sense alert to guard against possible surprise. The shadows and dark patches in the forest at night have caused many a brave man to start and grip his gun more tightly. What wonder that members of this little band should see the forms of Indians in the fantastic shapes the night gave to the objects about them?

Finally Pierre called a halt. "We sleep here," he said briefly.

Without fire and without blankets they threw themselves upon the ground and almost immediately were asleep. That is, all but Alec, for it had fallen to his lot to stand the first watch. Dennis was to relieve Alec and following the young Irishman, George was to take his turn. Pierre's watch was to be the last and the most

important one,—the time just before dawn.

Nothing happened to disturb the peace of the long night, however, and as the first streaks of light shimmered through the forest trees, Pierre aroused his sleeping companions.

"A leetle food first," he said when they were all three awake. "Then we go fast for Vincennes."

"How far is it?" asked George.

"Mebbe ten mile."

"Thin we'll be there in time f'r dinner," exclaimed Dennis joyously.

"Sh," cautioned Alec. "Don't talk so loud."

"Look here," said Dennis, turning to Alec. "I seem t' disturb ye all th' time wit' me loud talk. What do ye want me t' do about it?"

"Talk softly," said Alec irritably. "Every Indian in the neighborhood will be on our trail if you don't make less noise."

"Ye may be right," Dennis admitted. "At the same time, onless y'are a bit more perlite with yer advice I'll be timpted t' take yer head an' bang it ag'inst some hard tree. If I do that, it'll make more noise than a rid-hidded wood-

pecker an' ye know what that is. Do ye think that would be worse than me loud talk?''

''Stop arguing, you two,'' exclaimed George. ''Eat your food and get ready to start. I know Pierre doesn't want to waste any more time than he can help.''

''All right,'' agreed Dennis, cheerily. ''By the way,'' he added a moment later, ''spakin' o' rid-hidded woodpeckers reminds me o' somethin'.''

''What?'' inquired George innocently.

''Do ye really ask me that?'' demanded Dennis, feigning surprise.

''You just heard me, didn't you?''

''Yis, but it seemed too good to be true. It reminds me o' ye, o' course.''

''All right,'' smiled George. ''I'll admit my hair is red, but it doesn't seem to me you ought to object to that. Plenty of Irishmen have red hair, you know.''

''Do I know it? O' course I know it, and I meant no offinse whin I compared ye to a bird. It was a pretty bird anyway.''

''Yes,'' laughed George. ''I'd much rather look like a red-headed woodpecker than a great many other birds I know.''

"Did you ever hear a sillier lot of talk, Pierre?" demanded Alec disgustedly. "I think these two boys are simple-minded. Comparing each other to birds! Who ever heard of such nonsense? Bah!"

"Zey are young," answered Pierre. "When one iss young his mind mus' play also as his body. Eet iss all good for zem."

"Certainly it is, Alec," said George. "Don't you worry about us."

"Ze best way to stop all zis talk iss to move on," announced Pierre before Alec could reply. "Let us go."

Without further delay they all rose to their feet. A moment later Pierre was threading his way through the forest, closely followed by his three comrades. Their moccasined feet made no noise on the soft earth and silently as Indians they skulked along. There was no time for conversation now; every one was concerned only with making the fastest time that was consistent with safety.

For nearly two hours they traveled in this fashion. During that time nothing had happened to cause them the slightest alarm and it seemed as if their journey would soon be over.

A short distance ahead the forest ended and an open space led down to the river.

"I will go ahead an' reconnoiter," announced Pierre.

His companions halted while he stole forward. He advanced stealthily to the edge of the trees and peered around cautiously. Then all at once the three watchers saw him stand boldly upright and turn towards them excitedly.

"Come quick!" he shouted. "Come an' see!"

The three scouts ran forward eagerly and soon came to the spot where Pierre stood waiting for them. What they saw was well worth running for, too. Strung out in a long line over the open stretch of country lying between the forest and the Wabash, was an army. Nor was it an army of Indians, but of white men,—their own troops.

"Look at 'em! Look at 'em!" cried Dennis enthusiastically. "They've all come out to meet us."

"Not that, I guess," laughed George. "Still they look fine, don't they?"

A baggage train brought up the rear of the

procession, tugging horses straining in their harness. The army was a motley one, some on foot, some on horseback, but it looked fine to the four scouts.

"I see Giniral Harrison!" exclaimed Dennis suddenly.

"And there's Major White riding beside him," added Alec.

"Where do you suppose they're bound?" queried George eagerly. The sight of all those soldiers made the shivers run up and down his spine.

"To Tippecanoe probably," answered Pierre.

"Is that where Tecumseh is?"

"Not ze last time I know. He was going among ze different tribes to stir zem up an' make zem join heem."

"That's true," exclaimed George. "I remember that now. It is Tecumseh's brother who is at Tippecanoe, isn't it?"

"Yis, an' he's worse than Taycumseh," said Dennis. "He's wan o' thim crazy midicine min."

"What's his name?"

"Ellskwatawa," announced Alec instantly.

"Do you suppose he's been making trouble and that Governor Harrison is going after him now?" queried George.

"I do not know," said Pierre.

"Suppose we join the army," suggested Alec. "As long as we are enlisted it seems to me that is where we belong and if we stand here looking at them all day we may get left behind."

"True, but sarcastic," said Dennis.

"Come on," urged George, stepping out from the woods. "Let's go on down and report and then we can go where we belong."

"How many men do you think there are there?" mused Alec as the four scouts came out into the open and started across the plain.

"About eight or nine hundred I should say," said George.

"I think so," agreed Pierre.

"Enough to make ol' Eelwater, or whativir his name is, good and worried f'r sure," chuckled Dennis. "Look, they see us!"

A squad of horsemen detached themselves from the main body and came galloping rapidly towards the four scouts. Dennis waved his hat enthusiastically at the approaching cav-

alrymen, and they acknowledged his greeting with a shout. Presently the four scouts were standing in the center of a circle formed by the horses, and were talking eagerly to the men.

"Well, Pierre," exclaimed one of them. "We're glad to see you back. We had begun to fear that something had happened to you."

"Well, plenty of things happened all right," said Alec briskly. "You know though that it takes a pretty good Indian to get the best of Pierre."

"You're right there," agreed the man, Walter Hutton by name. "Pierre has been in the business entirely too long."

"Where is the army bound?" inquired George.

"Tippecanoe, I think," answered another of the horsemen named Hugh McLeod, a doughty Scotchman. "That brother of Tecumseh's, the Prophet, has been making things lively around here lately."

"An' it's our business t' make him stop, I suppose," said Dennis.

"If we can," smiled McLeod. "He's a pretty crafty old fox, though."

"Lave him to us," cried Dennis. "We'll fix

him." He was worked up to a high pitch of enthusiasm by the sight of the army and felt that no one in the world could stand against them now.

"How many men are zere?" asked Pierre.

"About nine hundred, I think," replied Walter Hutton. "They look a little mixed from here, some regulars, some volunteers, some on foot, and some on horseback, but I'll guarantee that they're all right."

"And any army can use a scout like you," observed another of the men to Pierre.

"Well, let's join them," exclaimed Alec eagerly. "I'm anxious to see all those men again."

The vanguard of the army had now passed the spot where the little party of soldiers was standing. As they approached, a great shout of welcome went up from the marching men, for Pierre was known the length and breadth of the border, and admired and respected wherever he was known.

Soon the four scouts fell in with the troops, and, guns over their shoulders, plodded along with the others. Innumerable questions were asked and had to be answered, for much had

happened in the few days since they had started away from Vincennes.

"Yes," said a rawboned young backwoodsman named Howard Scott, who was marching by the side of George, "the Prophet is certainly stirring things up along the border these days."

"What's he been doing particularly?" asked George.

"Do you want to know what he did to me?"

"I do," replied George, not having the slightest notion of what was to come.

"Well," said Howard. "I'll tell you what happened to my family. About two weeks ago we were living up here on the Wabash about as peaceful as any one could live. We had a snug log house and a few acres of land and we thought we were well off. There was my father and mother, two sisters, and a brother; I was the oldest child.

"One day one of my sisters, who was about fifteen, came running into the house and said she had seen two Indians skulking in the woods a little distance away. My father was not particularly alarmed by this news for he had never had any trouble with the Indians and had

the others. Mother wouldn't hear of such a thing, however. Her idea was that if we went separately and in different directions some of us were pretty near sure to escape while if we kept together we might be discovered and then all of us would be killed."

"That sounds like good reasonin'," remarked Dennis.

"Well, as soon as it was dark we started out," Howard went on. "We crept out of the door and all starting in different directions we stole across the clearing. I was alone, and as I saw no Indians and heard no sound at all, I began to think they might have gone away. How foolish I was. Suddenly I heard the war whoop and then a scream; I recognized my sister's voice and I can tell you the blood nearly froze in my veins.

"I wanted to go right back, but we had all promised mother to keep on going no matter what happened. If any of us were saved we would need the help of the others, and so with my heart as heavy as lead I kept going. I heard no more yells and hoped that the others had escaped. I saw no Indians and early the next morning arrived at our friend's home."

"How about the others?" asked George eagerly.

"They never came. The next day we organized a party of settlers and started back for our clearing. The house was burned to the ground, and after a search through the surrounding woods we found them all; mother, brother, father and two sisters all murdered by those red fiends. Do you wonder that I enlisted and am eager to punish those who have ruined my home?"

"I wouldn't blame ye no matter what ye did," said Dennis fiercely.

A bugle sounded at that moment and the long procession instantly halted.

"Eet iss for dinner," announced Pierre. "Now iss ze time for us to go an' report to Major White."

CHAPTER XIX

ON THE MARCH

MAJOR WHITE was pleased with the report the four scouts had to give and congratulated them on their fortunate escape from the cave.

"I understood that there were large bands of Indians in this section of the country," he said, "and I rather feared for your safety. I thought that Pierre would be a hard man to trap, though."

The stalwart Frenchman blushed at this praise and was plainly uncomfortable. As a rule the men who do things have no time to listen to compliments and Pierre was embarrassed.

Major White noticed this and laughed. "Don't let it worry you, Pierre," he said. "We all know what you are and we shan't keep reminding you of it if you don't want us to."

He dismissed the four scouts with a nod of his head and they returned to their company

and lost no time in joining their comrades who were busily engaged in eating their dinners. Dennis especially seemed to enjoy the repast, and while he ate he kept up a running fire of conversation with every one around him. His quick wit and good nature made him a strong favorite with the men, and while many of them tried a contest of words with him they were all speedily worsted and gave up laughingly.

After dinner the march was resumed. No attempt was made at rapid progress and the army proceeded in a leisurely fashion. General Harrison purposely went slowly, for it was not his desire to have war and he kept hoping against hope that the Indians would accede to his demands, when once they saw that the Americans were in earnest.

"Just what are his demands?" George asked one of the members of his company, a middle aged frontiersman named Crocker. He was known as "Crocker with the scar," because of a long mark across one cheek where a cornered wild cat had clawed him many years before.

"The Indians have been raiding the settlements and killing people right and left, you know that, of course," said Crocker.

"I do," admitted George.

"Well, things have come to a crisis, and the militia has been called out."

"I know that," said George. "What I want to know is what the demands are that General Harrison has made on the Prophet."

"He demands that he give up the murderers and return the stolen horses he has with him."

"The Prophet has been stealing horses too, has he?"

"He certainly has."

"What chance is there of his agreeing to do as we want?"

"No chance at all, to my way of thinking," said Crocker firmly.

"In that case what happens?"

"You know as well as I do."

"War?"

"That's it, and that's what we're here for now."

"You think there's no other way out of it, then?"

"We'll have to fight, I believe," exclaimed Crocker. "You can't argue with a crazy man like this Prophet. There's only one way you

can treat a fellow like that and that is to give him a good licking."

"Well, I guess we can do it all right," said George, glancing around at the long lines of men stretching far out in both directions.

"Too bad Tecumseh isn't here," said Crocker. "He's got good brains anyway and you can at least reason with him."

"Why, I thought Tecumseh was traveling around trying to stir up the tribes against us," exclaimed George. "That doesn't sound very much as if he would do much for us."

"I know," said Crocker, "but I don't believe he would stand for all this murdering and pillaging just the same. He wants to form a great confederacy of tribes to keep the white men out, and he'd fight too, but I think he'd fight fair."

"Perhaps he'll join the Prophet before we get to Tippecanoe."

"Maybe he will. Last I heard of him though he was down south among the Creeks and Choctaws and Chickasaws. He's a great orator and he'll probably get a lot of them to join him."

"Looks like busy times ahead on the border," smiled George grimly.

"Don't you worry about that, my boy," exclaimed Crocker. "You'll find all you want to do around here in the next year or so all right."

For several days the march was continued up the Wabash, and then a halt was called. A more or less permanent camp was pitched and from all indications the army was settling down for a stay of some duration.

"What happens now?" demanded Dennis as he watched these preparations.

"It looks as though we were goin' to stay for a while," said Alec.

"Sortinly it does," agreed Dennis. "I don't see th' p'int."

"Well I tell you what you do," exclaimed Alec sarcastically. "You just go to General Harrison and tell him you don't like what he's doing and he'll probably change his plans to suit you."

Dennis looked at Alec with a hurt expression in his eyes. "Why are ye so nasty to me lately?" he inquired. "It does ye no good."

"I know it doesn't," exclaimed Alec quickly. "I have gotten into the habit I guess. I don't mean anything by it though."

"I know ye don't," said Dennis, "so why don't ye stop?"

"I'll try," said Alec earnestly. "I wish you'd help me too."

"I sortinly will," smiled Dennis. "Iviry time ye git that way ag'in I'll whistle t'ree times and thin ye can call a halt."

"A good scheme," cried Alec. They shook hands and strolled away arm in arm. The army was encamped on the banks of the Wabash and Alec and Dennis made their way down to the water and sat down under a tree on the shore.

"To answer your original question I believe that we have halted here because General Harrison is going to send messengers to confer with the Prophet," said Alec, when they were comfortably seated.

"An' th' Prophet will stick a knife in thim an' sind thim back t' us no doubt," said Dennis. "A fine fellow he is!"

"He needs to be taught some manners just as I do," said Alec.

"Don't ye belave it," laughed Dennis. "Look, here comes Pierre and George."

"What's the latest news, Pierre?" called Alec as their two friends drew near.

"Ze general, he send messengers to treat wiz ze Prophet," said Pierre.

"Are you one of them?"

"No. Only ze friendly Indians go."

"Some Delawares and Miamis," explained George.

"Can ye trust thim?" demanded Dennis.

"Yes," said Pierre. "Zey are ver' reliable."

"An' if they make peace f'r us th' war will be over, and we'll have nothin' t' do but go home ag'in, I suppose."

"Wouldn't you rather do that than get killed by Indians?" laughed George.

"I want t' git in a fight!" cried Dennis. "I say that so long as we must smash thim sometime, why not do it now an' be done?"

"Zat iss right," said Pierre heartily. "Eet mus' be done sometime."

"An' we're th' byes t' do it!" cried Dennis slapping Alec so vigorously upon his back that he howled with pain.

"We stay here some days," said Pierre.

"Yes, and I'm on duty as sentinel tonight," said George.

"Is that so?" exclaimed Dennis. "Well I hope ye keep awake."

"Don't worry about that," said George confidently. "And all the time I'm keeping watch I suppose you'll be snoring away in your blankets for all you're worth."

"I will," said Dennis. "That's why I hope ye kape awake f'r thin I can sleep in peace."

"I've got to watch the horses," said George.

"A fine job that!" exclaimed Dennis. "Thank hivin, 'tis not me what has t' guard thim!"

"I guess no one would be so foolish as to ask you to do a thing like that," laughed Alec. "You're no horseman, you know, Dennis."

"Do I know it? Of course I know it, an' I'm not wan bit sorry."

"I'd rather ride horseback than do anything I know of almost," said George.

"Because yer an expert," snorted Dennis. "Why shouldn't ye?"

"I won't argue with you," laughed George.

"At any rate I must be going now. It'll soon be dark and I must report for duty."

"What time do you go on?" asked Alec.

"Not till midnight, but I have to report now."

"Good luck to ye!" called Dennis, as George walked away. The young sentinel turned and waved his hand in acknowledgment of the words, and soon disappeared over the rising ground between the river and the camp.

He presented himself before the officer of the guard and was assigned a place in which he might sleep until it should be his turn to go on duty. Immediately after supper George turned in and was asleep almost instantly. It was never his custom to stay up late in the evening, but that night he rolled himself in his blankets much earlier than usual, knowing that when he was on sentry duty his wits would be all the sharper for the sleep.

The noises of the camp did not disturb his slumbers and he lay like a log until midnight when he was shaken gently and told to report. George was on his feet and wide awake almost at once. He was provided with a horse and quickly mounting he rode off towards the place

where the horses were kept. They were not tethered, but had several mounted guards such as George, whose duty it was to prevent the animals from wandering away from the herd, and to keep all of them near the camp. The guards were also to shield them against possible surprise attacks, though it was not considered probable that hostile Indians would dare approach so large an encampment.

There was no moon as George took his place and began to ride slowly up and down on one side of the drove of horses. There were several hundred of them gathered there, making a very imposing array in the faint starlight. Now and then a horse whinnied, and another would snort or blow the air from his nostrils. Even the faint noise of their hoofs could be heard as they wandered along in search of pasture.

Their backs showed different colors, and George pictured them in his mind as representing the waves of some shadowy sea. Now and again he met one of the other guards and exchanged a few words with him. There was not much time for conversation, however, as some adventurous animal was constantly try-

ing to stray away from the others, and had to be turned back. Now and again the whole drove had to be persuaded to change its course and return nearer to camp.

George enjoyed the work, however. He liked the sense of responsibility and the loneliness of the night appealed to him. He began to imagine that he was a great rancher and that all of these horses belonged to him. How fine that would be, he thought. There must be many splendid horses in the number, and how jealous his friends would be of him. He pictured himself as being very generous, and surprising some friend with the gift of a mount. He laughed silently as he pictured the astonishment and pleasure on the friend's face when he heard of the unexpected present.

The first faint streaks of dawn were beginning to creep across the sky. There was more of a suggestion of light than actual light itself.

George did not notice, however. He was too busy with his thoughts. He was suddenly roused from his dreams, however, and most unexpectedly.

All at once blood-curdling yells seemed to is-

sue from all parts of the herd. Guns were fired and instantly all was confusion. The frightened horses reared and plunged, the shots and yells continued and it seemed as if the entire drove might stampede.

CHAPTER XX

PURSUIT

GEORGE was unable to see who it was that was stirring up the horses. It was still too dark to distinguish objects clearly and it was almost impossible to tell from what particular spot among the mass of animals the sounds were issuing. As a matter of fact they seemed to be coming from everywhere at once.

"Indians of course," muttered George. Doubtless they had stolen in among the horses he thought, and were now trying to stampede them and run them off. How to prevent this was the question to be decided.

George and all the other guards rode madly up and down, striving desperately to prevent any of the horses from breaking away from the main body. The guards were not many, however, and it was certain that unless help arrived immediately, the horses would be scattered far and wide, and then there was no telling how many would be lost.

No doubt the Indians had wormed their way across the prairie and stolen in among the herd right under the very eyes of the guards. Then when the signal was given they had all commenced to shout and yell at the same time in an effort to demoralize the animals. That they were succeeding in their design was only too apparent from the actions of the frightened beasts.

Despite the frantic efforts of the guards stray squads of horses got away from them now and then, and with ever-increasing frequency. The whole camp had been aroused by the commotion, however, and now men began to run out to help and try to prevent the stampede. Daring riders they were the most of them, and did not hesitate to swing themselves onto the bare backs of the nearest horses and then lend their aid to the hard pressed guards.

George recognized Pierre in the half-light. He saw the doughty Frenchman vault across the back of a big roan horse and clinging to its mane with one hand start in pursuit of a band of a half-dozen frightened animals galloping off across the prairie.

Where were the Indians who had started the

trouble, George wondered. Thus far he had seen none of them emerge from the tangle of plunging horses and he knew that they must do so soon if they wished to escape. He had been keeping a close watch, his rifle ready, for just that very thing. How many of them were there anyway?

Suddenly he saw what he had been expecting. An Indian emerged, seemingly from among the hoofs of the terror-stricken drove, and springing upon the back of a racing horse he locked both arms around its neck and a moment later was lost to sight in the darkness. It all happened so suddenly that George was almost stunned and too bewildered to act. Indeed before he fully realized what was taking place the Indian was gone.

It would not happen again though, he told himself. He would be ready the next time and he promised himself that the Indian should not escape so easily. His rifle in his hand and with eyes straining to see through the semi-darkness he waited. Surely there must be more to come.

The whole plain was now a confused tangle of shouting men and plunging horses. The sol-

diers were running in all directions, frantically waving their arms and trying to head off horses that showed a tendency to forsake the main body. The yells of the Indians still resounded, showing that some of them at least were still about.

Suddenly another man shot out from under the mass of hoofs and swinging astride of a near-by horse strove to dash away as the first one had done.

"Not this time," muttered George doggedly, and clapping spurs to his horse he sped forward. The Indian, for Indian he felt sure the man was, was now mounted and was slapping his horse vigorously with his open hand while he bent low over its back. He had turned the horse's head and was just preparing to depart when George arrived upon the scene.

He dared not shoot. A wild shot might hit one of his friends or kill some one of the horses. At any rate it was not necessary. He clubbed his rifle and riding alongside his adversary raised it aloft. One well-aimed blow would do as well as a bullet.

Before he brought the butt of the gun down upon the man's skull, however, a strange thing

happened. The man, sensing danger, looked up and to George's amazement he saw that it was not an Indian at all that he was pursuing. It was a white man, and what was even more startling, it was some one that seemed to be very familiar.

"Look out, George," said the man sharply. "Don't strike. It's me."

George hesitated and drew back for an instant. Before he could recover from his surprise the man had urged his horse forward and a moment later had vanished from sight in the midst of the swaying, heaving mass of horses and men.

"Well—" began George, half stunned with the unexpectedness of it all. He was suddenly interrupted, however.

"Hello, George," called a voice at his side. He turned to see Dennis.

"Hello, Dennis," he shouted. "Get a horse and come with me, quick."

"Git a horse, nothin'!" retorted the young Irishman. "Nivir ag'in."

"But I need help."

"I'll run beside ye. Lemme git hold o' yer saddle."

"Don't get run over," warned George. "This is a dangerous place to be on foot."

"Leave that t' me."

"Guess who I just saw," exclaimed George.

"Who?"

"Burch."

"Ye didn't! Where was he?"

"Right here."

"I didn't know he was with th' army."

"Nor I. I don't think he is either."

"Thin, what was he doin' here?"

"That's what I'd like to know. It looks to me as if he came right out from the middle of the drove and tried to run away."

"Ye mean that—"

"I'm not sure what I mean," exclaimed George. "Where's Pierre?"

"I haven't seen him."

"Well, we'd better find him," urged George. "And we'd better see if we can't do something around here too."

The sun now was above the horizon and its rays shone on a very strange sight. The prairie was dotted with men and horses scattered in all directions. Here and there in the distance a band of men could be seen in pur-

suit of some fleeing Indian. Two of the red men had been killed as they attempted to escape and one had been captured. How big a band there had been at the start it was impossible to estimate. At any rate, many of them appeared to have made good their escape.

"Well, they've certainly made trouble for us this time," exclaimed Alec.

"I should say so," agreed George. "What'll the army do without horses?"

"F'r my part I shall do very well," said Dennis.

"But we must have horses," George protested.

"Well, I guess we've got most of them," said Alec. "They didn't get away with many and the rest only need to be rounded up."

"S'pose the rid divils take it into their hides t' attack th' army now," Dennis suggested. "That would stir things up all right."

"I should say so," exclaimed George. "With our men scattered all over the plain they could certainly do a lot of damage."

"Don't worry about that," said Alec confidently. "General Harrison knows his business all right; he's got a body of nearly three hun-

dred men in camp to guard against just such a thing."

"I guess you're right, Alec," said George. "We needn't worry about General Harrison's knowing what to do."

"Tell him who ye saw," said Dennis.

"That's right," exclaimed George. "Who do you think I saw just now, Alec?"

"I've no idea. Tecumseh?"

"No," laughed George, "nor the Prophet neither."

"Who was it?"

"Burch."

"You don't say so!" said Alec in surprise. "What was he doing?"

"That's what we'd like to know," and he proceeded to tell of his meeting with the man of mystery.

"That's certainly strange," mused Alec when the story had been told. "Perhaps he told the truth when we met him the other day after all."

"You mean that General Harrison really had sent him on some mission, and that now he is back?"

"I say it's possible."

"Yes," agreed George, "it's possible all right, but I'd like to know what he was doing in the middle of all those horses."

"He may not have been there," suggested Alec. "You know the light was bad and you may have been deceived."

"Yes," George admitted, "there's a chance of that of course, but I don't think so," and he shook his head sagely.

"I'd like t' ask the giniral if he ivir sint Burch on that mission," said Dennis. " 'Twould be int'ristin' t' know."

"We'll ask Major White sometime," said George.

"You also know," said Alec, "that in an army of nine hundred men it is very possible not to know who all of them are."

"Yes," said George, "that's true. Still there's something funny about that man and I'd like to know what is at the bottom of it."

"Well, let's not tell Pierre right away," suggested Alec. "It'll only get him excited and will do no good."

It was so agreed and the three volunteers turned their attention to the task of rounding up the horses. It was not an easy undertaking,

however, and the work of identifying individual mounts after they were caught was also most difficult. It was late in the afternoon before the last squads reported, and upon count it was found that only fifteen horses were missing, which was not considered bad at all under the circumstances.

General Harrison's army had by no means finished with the Indians, however.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ADVANCE CONTINUES

SEVERAL days later the messengers, whom General Harrison had sent to treat with the Prophet, returned. Their report was awaited eagerly by the army and there was much speculation concerning it. Opinions in camp varied greatly; some felt that the Prophet would be frightened by the size of the army and give in; others were equally positive that nothing of the sort would happen.

The truth came out shortly. Alec, who was always prying into everything, was the first of the four friends to get the details.

"This is what happened," he exclaimed importantly. Dennis, George and Pierre were seated together on the ground in front of their tent as he approached. Alec paused and waited expectantly for some one of his friends to urge him on.

"Go on an' say it!" said Dennis. "Don't keep us in suspinse."

"Well, the Prophet was not very glad to see our messengers," Alec went on, rather meekly after this cool reception.

"Did ye think he would be?" demanded Dennis.

"Let him tell his story, Dennis," urged George.

"Every one in the Prophet's camp was hostile to them," said Alec. "They were treated haughtily and insolently."

"How about the demands they made?" inquired George.

"Rejected," exclaimed Alec. "Rejected absolutely."

"By ze council as well as ze Prophet?" asked Pierre.

"Everybody. Neither the Prophet, nor any of his band seemed to want to do the slightest thing to keep peace and prevent war."

"Then we'll surely have war I s'pose," said Dennis, not without a gleam in his eye. He liked fighting well enough to cause him to look forward eagerly to a battle.

"I fear so," mused Pierre. "Eet looks ver' bad."

"It certainly does," exclaimed George. "I

guess we wouldn't have seen Indians riding around in war paint, and they wouldn't be raiding the settlements and trying to drive off our horses if they meant peace."

At this moment a man came riding madly into camp. His horse was wet and flecked with foam, showing how hard he had ridden. He drew rein in the center of the camp and was immediately surrounded by a curious throng.

"What's wrong, Foster?" inquired one of the soldiers who recognized the tired horseman. "What's the trouble?"

"Indians," panted Foster.

"Where, where?" demanded a hundred voices at once.

Foster swung halfway around in his saddle and pointed in the direction whence he had just come. "Back there," he said, still breathing hard. "A band of about fifty chased me, and if I hadn't had a fair start and a good horse I wouldn't be here now." He gazed ruefully at his left wrist which oozed blood, and hung limp.

"You're wounded!" exclaimed the soldier who had first spoken. "Get down off your horse and let us attend to you."

A score of willing hands assisted him and a moment later he stood leaning on one of his comrades, while another led his horse away to attend to its needs.

"I'd been back to Vincennes," said Foster, "and was returning. Five miles or so back here I suddenly ran into the Indians. They saw me the same instant that I did them, and I can tell you they wasted no time in getting after me either. I thought surely it was all up with me."

"How near to camp did they follow you?" asked some one.

"Well, they were almost in sight of it."

"How did you get your wound?"

"One of the Indians who had a bay pony gained on me, and at one time was only a hundred yards or so behind. He took a shot at me and this is what he did." Foster held up his wrist for the crowd to see.

"This is getting serious," muttered Alec. He and his three friends had joined the throng gathered around Foster.

"Ye're quick, Alec," said Dennis, at the same time nudging George.

"What do you mean?" demanded Alec, not

knowing quite what the young Irishman's words and tone signified.

"I mean ye're quick t' catch on t' things," explained Dennis seriously. "Th' minute ye heard about whot happened t' Foster ye knew that things was serious. No wan had t' tell ye at all."

"Are you trying to tease me?" demanded Alec, his ire threatening to rise. "I advise you not to try it. At any rate this is no time for fooling. I said things are serious, and they are."

"Exactly what I said," agreed Dennis, striving desperately to look solemn. "All I said was that you was one o' th' first t' appreciate it."

Alec looked suspiciously at Dennis, but as he saw no trace of laughter in the young Irishman's face, he began to think that his remarks were really serious. Alec was conceited and like all conceited people could easily be made to believe extravagant things about himself.

"Let's go back to the tent," urged George suddenly. He feared that he would laugh and spoil the whole thing unless he got away soon.

He had seen Dennis flatter Alec many times before and never did the trapper fail to succumb to the guile of the mischievous young Irishman.

"I think zat ze army will soon move," predicted Pierre when they were back at the tent.

"You think we'll march on Tippecanoe?" asked George.

"I think we must. If ze Indians are still hostile we must go and show zem zat we mean business."

"You're dead right, Pierre," exclaimed Alec. "Nothing but an immediate advance will bring matters to a crisis. It must be done."

"An' whin they see our army they'll give in, ye think?" said Dennis.

"Maybe," said Alec, "but I doubt it. I understand that adventurous young braves from all this part of the country are flocking to Tippecanoe. They think there's a fine chance of a fight and some scalps and they're anxious to make a try of it."

"Zen zat iss all ze more reason why we should go after zem at once," insisted Pierre.

"I think I'll go and hang around headquarters and see if I can't hear some gossip," ex-

claimed George, springing to his feet. "Any one want to come?"

Apparently no one did, so George departed alone. He was swinging along one of the camp streets, revolving the events of the day in his mind when a strange and most unexpected thing happened.

He turned the corner of one of the tents and ran squarely into the arms of a man. Both of them were startled and drew back with words of apology. Regaining his wits George was astounded to find himself looking squarely into the eyes of the mysterious Burch.

CHAPTER XXII

UP THE RIVER

"WELL, what are you doing here?" demanded George in surprise.

"What are you doing here yourself?" retorted Burch roughly.

"I'm in the army."

"You're not the only one in it, you know."

"Did you enlist?"

"When I met you and your friends back there in the valley I told you I was on a mission for General Harrison, didn't I?" demanded Burch.

"You did."

"Well, for some reason you didn't seem to believe me. Not that I care what you think, and besides I'm in a hurry." He brushed past George as he spoke and quickly disappeared behind one of the tents.

For some moments the young soldier stood still, too amazed to do anything. Then when he had recovered his wits he turned and hurried back to his tent, all thought of headquarters

gone from his mind. His one idea was to tell his three comrades about his meeting.

"It didn't take ye long t' find out th' gossip," remarked Dennis as George approached.

"Guess who I saw just now," exclaimed George excitedly.

"Burch," said Alec promptly.

"Why, did you see him too?" demanded George in surprise.

"No, I just guessed."

"Well that's the man I saw all right."

"Zat snake!" snarled Pierre. "What iss he doing here?"

"He didn't tell me," said George, "and before I could ask him he was gone. He hinted, though, that he was in the army just as we are."

"I wouldn't be surprised t' see that fellow anywhere at all," remarked Dennis. "He's always turnin' up whin ye least expict it."

"Did he say anything about what kind of a trip he had up that valley after we stopped him the other day?" inquired Alec.

"No. All he said about that was that apparently we hadn't believed him when he said he was on an errand for General Harrison."

"Zat iss true enough," muttered Pierre.

"Did ye ask him about bein' in amongst thim horses the other night?" asked Dennis.

"I didn't have a chance. He hurried right away from me."

"Are ye sure 'twas him ye saw?"

"Today?"

"No. Th' other night."

"I wouldn't swear to it, but I'm almost positive of it."

" 'Tis quare," mumbled Dennis. "There goes Major White, Alec; why don't ye run an' ask him about this man Burch?"

"I will," exclaimed Alec, and springing quickly to his feet he hurried off to intercept the officer who was going past. A moment later the two men were in earnest conversation, while Alec's three companions sat and curiously watched them.

Alec soon returned to the tent and was at once plied with questions.

"The major says he is quite sure that Burch never went on any mission for General Harrison," said Alec.

"Major White knows Burch all right, does he?" asked George.

"Yes, he said he remembered him very well at Vincennes."

"When did he enlist?"

"Major White doesn't think he ever did."

"What's that?" cried George. "Then what is he doing here, and why did he practically tell me that he had enlisted?"

"You'll have to ask Burch that," said Alec. "I can't answer it."

"I do not believe zat you will have ze chance to ask heem," said Pierre quickly.

"Why not?" demanded Alec.

"I do not think zat Burch iss here."

"What do you mean? Do you think he has left camp?"

"I do."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because I—"

The sound of a bugle interrupted whatever it was that Pierre was starting to say.

"Hear that?" cried Alec as the notes died away. "You know what that means, don't you?"

"That we strike camp and march on up the Wabash, I suppose," said George. "Is that what you think?"

"It is, and I believe we'll leave at once."

His surmise proved to be correct, for orders were soon issued to break camp and prepare to move. Instantly all was bustle and hurry. Men ran hither and thither loading tents and supplies on wagons, saddling horses, and in every way making ready for a speedy departure.

In a remarkably short time the army was in line, ready to move. The order was given and the advance guard, consisting of cavalry, trotted out of camp. It was their function to form a screen in front of the main body and report any hostile bands of Indians which might be discovered. Also it was their duty to shield the army from surprise attacks.

The rest of the troops followed close behind; then came the supply wagons and then the rear guard to protect the provisions. There was a great snapping of whips, shouting of orders and noise. A cheer was given by a few young volunteers, enthusiastic at the prospect of war.

"Zey don't know what eet means," remarked Pierre grimly.

"I guess they won't be cheerin' a few days from now," said Dennis.

"Which route to Tippecanoe do you suppose we'll take, Pierre?" asked Alec. "Will we stay on this bank or cross to the north side of the Wabash?"

"I do not know."

"Which do you think is better?"

"Eet iss wooded on zis bank, and prairies on ze ozzer."

"No ambuscades on the north bank then," remarked George.

"True," admitted Pierre. "Eet iss more direct zis way, however."

"But Tippecanoe is across the river from here, isn't it?"

"Oh yes. We must cross ze river sometime."

"Well, I predict we go through the woods on this side," said Alec.

"An' I says we take th' other," exclaimed Dennis promptly.

"Of course you'd say the opposite from what I did," observed Alec.

"Not at all, but ye fergot wan thing whin ye were talkin' about goin' up on this side."

"What's that?"

"It's all woods, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well thin," exclaimed Dennis triumphantly, "how are ye goin' t' git th' wagons through?"

"Maybe there's a wagon road," said Alec.

"How about that, Pierre?" demanded Dennis. "Is there a road?"

"I do not think so."

"Thin I guess I was right," exclaimed Dennis. "Ye'll find that we soon cross th' river an' start over th' prairies."

"Wait and see," muttered Alec, though he was very much afraid that what Dennis had said was true.

"It's hilly on this side too," said George. "Woods and hills make a hard combination through which to take wagons."

Greatly to their surprise, however, General Harrison had apparently selected the south bank as the better route to follow. The army was halted when it reached the wooded section and a party was sent ahead to reconnoiter.

"I guess I was right after all, Dennis," gloated Alec when he saw the preparations being made.

"Mebbe ye were," admitted Dennis grudgingly.

"No doubt of it," exclaimed Alec, as he walked away.

Apparently Alec was correct, for when the reconnoitering party returned and reported, a large force of men was sent ahead with axes to clear a wagon road. The forest soon resounded with the crash of falling trees, and the men worked like beavers to clear a way. For several days the work continued, and every day the scouting parties reported constantly increasing numbers of Indians hovering around.

"I can't understand it," murmured Dennis. "We're attractin' ivery Injin in the country to this spot, and we'll be ambushed sure."

"It does seem queer, I admit," said George. "Still I always try to look at it this way: the general knows more about it than we do and as he is giving the orders and making the plans, all we need to worry about is the work of carrying them out."

"Yer right o' course," agreed Dennis. "I just wish I understood it."

The camp was full of men who were equally puzzled by General Harrison's action and many began to murmur. It seemed strange to spend time and effort hewing a road through the for-

est when across the river was open, level country, easy to travel and with no danger of ambuscades.

"The Indians will enjoy it anyway, Pierre," said George to the trapper. "They're much better as fighters in the woods than they are on the prairies."

Pierre merely shook his head sorrowfully. The whole proceeding was a mystery to him and he was worried. But what could he do? He was only a private in the ranks and could not object to the general's strategy. At the same time he felt that he knew far more woodcraft than all the officers put together and he was probably very nearly right. He hated to see them make foolish mistakes.

The next morning the advance was resumed. The army got under way early and soon the advance guard had disappeared down the new road into the woods. The main body followed closely behind and in the first rank were the four volunteers. Most of the men were gloomy and little was said for the first few miles; the men were nervous and fearful lest they were walking into a trap.

At length they came to an opening in the

woods that ran down to the river. Across the clearing the woods began again.

"Look zere," cried Pierre suddenly. "Look down zere by ze river."

"Why, what's going on?" exclaimed George in surprise.

"Ze army iss beginning to cross ze river."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE GENERAL'S STRATEGY

"I SEE it all now," exclaimed George. "I see just what General Harrison's plans were. I guess he knows more than we do, all right."

"There was nivir any doubt o' that," agreed Dennis, "but what is his plan?"

"Why, by pretending that we were going to advance along the south bank of the Wabash he could lead the Prophet into sending all his scouting parties and small bands on that side of the river. When the Indians saw us cutting wagon roads through the woods the Prophet undoubtedly was sure that that was the place for him to mass his men. Now we have fooled them."

"Do ye think we'll attack before they do?"

"I can't say. All I am doing is to guess anyway."

Soon they came to the river and the army began to cross. It was hard work to transfer the

supply wagons from one side to the other, but the task at length was accomplished and when all the men and horses were moved to the opposite shore, the advance was continued.

"I guess I was right whin I said we would use this side o' th' river, Alec," Dennis reminded his companion.

"So was I right," exclaimed Alec. "We traveled the other side for a while anyway."

"But—"

"You were both right," laughed George. "Let's not start that argument again."

The discussion was dropped at George's suggestion, and for the present Dennis and Alec stopped wrangling. The advance was more rapid now, for the country through which they were passing consisted of wide rolling prairies, and there were few situations favorable for ambuscades. Consequently the army could proceed rapidly. It was not necessary to reconnoiter all the ground ahead and then wait for the scouts' report before proceeding.

"Have you seen Burch again, George?" asked Alec.

"Not a glimpse of him; I've been on the lookout for him too."

"Mebbe Pierre has seen him," suggested Dennis, in a low voice to George, and with a sly wink of his eye.

"What's the use in getting him all stirred up?" exclaimed George. "You know how angry he gets when you mention Burch's name."

"I know it," grinned Dennis. "That's th' fun."

"Better leave Pierre alone," Alec cautioned. "He's been sort of grouchy the last few days and I advise you not to stir him up."

"He's thinkin' o' all the Injins he's goin' t' fight," said Dennis.

"All of us had better think something about Indians," retorted Alec. "We're going to run into them before long sure and then we'll have to look sharp."

"But how about Burch?" demanded George. "What's happened to him?"

"Do ye think I c'n kape me finger on a will-o'-th'-wisp like that?" exclaimed Dennis. "If ye do ye're mistaken."

"I don't expect you to keep your finger on him," said George. "All I want to know is what his business around here is."

"Ask Pierre, I told ye."

"I don't dare."

"Thin don't ask me ayther."

Pondering over the strange activities of Arnold Burch, George relapsed into silence, and in silence he swung along with the rest of the soldiers marching for the defense of their homes and the peace of their country against the Indian prophet, Ellskwatawa.

Suddenly a murmur arising in the front ranks ran through the army. George was aroused from his reveries and demanded to know what was happening.

"Indians," said a man in front curtly.

"Where are they? What are they doing? Are they going to attack us? How many of them are there?" These and many more questions were flung back and forth throughout the ranks by the excited men.

"Halt!" came the order and the army came to a stop.

"Now what happens, I wonder," exclaimed Alec.

"How many Indians are there ahead?" asked George.

"A few dozen."

"A scouting party, I suppose," said George.

A short time later the advance guard of the army moved forward apparently with the idea of opening a parley with the Indians. The rest of the army looked on intently and with deep interest.

"Our men are likely to be led into a trap," said George fearfully.

"Not on the open prairie, I guess," Alec exclaimed.

"It's not all open," said George. "Those patches of woods all around may be chock full of Indians."

"What if they are?"

"If our men should follow after those few Indians they might be suddenly attacked on all sides."

"They're wise enough not to do anything foolish," said Alec confidently. "I guess we've no cause to worry about them."

The emissaries did not get close enough to the Indians to converse with them, however. The red men withdrew at the approach of the soldiers, and with open manifestations of insult and defiance rode away. There was noth-

ing left for the soldiers to do, but to return to the main body and make their report.

"Eet looks bad," said Pierre with a solemn shake of his head.

"I notice yer lookin' t' see if yer gun is all right," observed Dennis.

"We must be ready," said Pierre.

"Right you are, Pierre," exclaimed Alec. "There's going to be a battle here before long."

"How far are we from Tippecanoe now?" asked George.

"Five or six miles I should say, wouldn't you, Pierre?" Alec replied.

"I think so," said the trapper. "And now we go nearer."

The order to advance was given and once more the army moved forward. The pace was slow and the utmost caution was used. Bands of savages appeared on all sides now, and the commanders were in constant fear of an attack.

"Look at 'em!" exclaimed Dennis. "Iviry wan o' thim on a horse too."

"I wish we were," said George feelingly.

"I don't notice a silly remark like that," said

Dennis. "Look at the crowd o' thim, though."

"Yes, and zey will soon make trouble for us," said Pierre grimly. "Zey are all in an ugly mood and zey mean to fight sure."

"Let 'em come," cried Dennis. "We'll fix the divils."

"Don't be so sure of that, young man," cautioned an old campaigner on the other side of Dennis. "These Indians are not fools."

"We must be pretty near to the Prophet's town by now," remarked George. They had been marching slowly along for the last two hours.

"Tippecanoe iss about one mile ahead up zere," said Pierre.

"An' it looks as if the whole town was out t' mate us," said Dennis. "Th' whole prairie is covered with th' rid fellers."

"Who are these men coming to meet us?" exclaimed Alec suddenly. The four friends were up with the vanguard of the troops and consequently could see almost everything that was going on.

"They must be three chiefs," observed George, looking at the three figures riding up to meet the army. "They've certainly got on

all their best clothes anyway; and look at their feathers."

Three gorgeously arrayed braves came riding across the prairie. A short distance away they halted and made it known that they desired a conference. While the army remained at rest General Harrison and two of his officers rode out to meet the Indians.

A long parley was held and then the officers returned to their places, while the Indians withdrew in the direction whence they had come.

"I wish we knew what was decided," exclaimed George eagerly.

"You'll know soon enough," said Alec. "Don't worry."

"We're going to camp here, I guess," observed George suddenly.

Sure enough, orders were issued to pitch camp and the work was begun at once.

"A fine place we've got, sure," remarked Dennis approvingly. "A little bit of an ilivation, with the prairie all around."

"Couldn't be better," agreed Alec. "The grass is certainly long around here though, isn't it?"

"I should say it is," exclaimed George.

"Why around that knoll where we're going to camp you could almost stand up in it and be hidden."

"Well, I don't want to hide," said Alec. "I want to sleep. I have sentry duty to do to-night."

"And so have I," agreed George.

"An' me too," joined in Dennis.

"Not I," said Pierre.

"Ye'll be well proticted with us three on dooty, Pierre, me bye," cried Dennis. "Go t' sleep an' forget there's such things as Injins."

"Never, I fear," replied Pierre with a wry smile.

"I want to know what was decided at that conference," exclaimed George. Along with Dennis and Alec he was busily engaged in building a fire. Dusk was rapidly approaching and here and there all over the camp the blaze of wood fires began to glimmer through the gathering dusk.

"I can tell you," said a voice close at hand and George turned to find himself once more face to face with Arnold Burch.

CHAPTER XXIV

ON WATCH

"WELL f'r th' love o' hivin!" exclaimed Dennis, who had spied Burch almost as soon as had George. "Are ye a man or a ghost?"

"I'm a man," laughed Burch. George thought he had never seen him look so agreeable.

"Where do ye disappear to, then?" demanded Dennis.

"We've been looking all over for you," said George. "No one of us has seen you in the last few days and we wondered where you were." He watched Burch narrowly to see the effect of his words. Burch made no sign, however. He smiled pleasantly and seemed perfectly at ease.

"Another mission for General Harrison," he said lightly. "It's hard work to be the special envoy for the commander-in-chief."

"Is that what you've been doing?" challenged Alec.

"That's what I said," retorted Burch with a faint trace of a snarl in his voice, the first hint of his old rough manner.

"How do ye git through all thim Injins so aisy?" asked Dennis.

"Did I say it was easy?"

"No," Dennis admitted, "but it seems t' be."

"Well, it isn't," exclaimed Burch, "and besides it seems to me you people are always asking an awful lot of questions."

"You're right," answered Alec, "and the reason is that we are puzzled to know what to make of you. You're a mystery to us."

"I'm glad I am," retorted Burch, his pleasant manner vanishing. "I also hope that some day you may learn a few manners and not keep inquiring into the personal affairs of your superiors."

This remark took the three friends somewhat aback. The mention of the word "superiors" rather daunted them for a moment. Dennis, however, was not one to be frightened by an implied threat and he quickly regained his poise and nerve.

"Pierre would like t' ask ye some questions too," he drawled. "I wisht he was here."

"Well, if he wants to see me, tell him to come to headquarters," exclaimed Burch, and he promptly strode away.

"He never told us what was decided at the conference anyway," said George as he and his two friends watched Burch's retreating figure.

"He's a quare wan all right," said Dennis. "How do ye suppose he c'n be workin' f'r Giniral Harrison an' Major White not know it?"

"I don't see at all," exclaimed George. "What do you think he meant when he was talking about being our superior?"

"He's a mystery to me," observed Alec. "I suspect him too."

"What of?"

"I don't know. Of everything I guess; he comes and goes so strangely and he does things in such a strange way. There's a sort of a veil of mystery about him all the time."

"I wish Pierre had been here."

"So do I. When he comes we might ask

him to go to neadquarters and interview his friend Burch.''

''What excuse would he have?'' asked George.

''None.''

At that moment Pierre approached the fire, which was now blazing merrily. His three friends huddled closely about it, for the night was cool and the warmth of the blaze most welcome.

''We just saw a frind o' yours,'' announced Dennis.

''You mean Burch?'' queried Pierre. ''I saw heem also.''

''Where?'' demanded George.

''Right here in camp.''

''Did you speak with him?''

''No, and he did not see me.''

''What do you think about him?'' inquired Alec.

''Zat he iss a snake. I also think ozzer sings about heem.''

''What?''

''Do you wish to hear what was said at ze conference?'' asked Pierre, evidently not wishing to talk about Burch any more.

"Won't you tell us what you know about Burch?" asked George.

"Do you wish to hear what was said at ze conference?" Pierre repeated.

"Of course we do," said George. "Tell us what happened." He knew the French trapper too well to urge him to talk about something he did not care to discuss.

"Well," said Pierre, "ze Indians wished to know why eet was zat ze soldiers were advancing against zem."

"As though they didn't know," exclaimed Alec. "Do they think we're going to let them murder our people and we do nothing about it?"

"Zey said," continued Pierre, "zat ze Prophet did not wish a war, but zat he desire peace."

"He wants us to let him alone so he can go on murdering, that's what he wants," snorted Alec in disgust.

"Leave him tell his story," said Dennis to Alec. "Ye keep interruptin' him, iviry tin seconds."

"I'm not stopping him," muttered Alec, but nevertheless he lapsed into silence.

"Ze Indians say zat ze Prophet have sent a peace message down ze Wabash by Miami and Pottawattomie chiefs."

"Where are they?" asked George.

"Zay say zey go down ze wrong side of ze river."

"Huh!" snorted Alec. "A fine chance of that!"

"Well, General Harrison he think mebbe zey tell ze truth," said Pierre. "He agree to wait till tomorrow to hold a council an' talk of peace. So he decide to camp here, and here we are."

"All ready to be attacked," exclaimed Alec.

"Maybe the Indians do want peace," said George hopefully.

"Don't fool yourself, my boy," said Alec. "There's just about as much chance of that as there is of the sun not rising tomorrow."

"Or o' Alec's ever bein' as smart a fellow as Dinnis," added the mischievous young Irishman, nudging George in his ribs.

Alec merely turned and glared at the speaker and said nothing.

The glow of the myriads of camp fires, with the many figures busy around them, the fresh

night wind directly off the prairies, and the rustle of the breeze through the tall grass produced a soothing effect upon the four friends and soon after supper they repaired to their blankets. All of them but Pierre were to go on guard duty after midnight, and they felt that they needed the sleep.

In almost no time at all they were deep in the land of dreams, and their heavy and regular breathing showed that they slept well. The hum and bustle of the camp died away little by little and quiet settled over all. Many sentinels had been posted, however, for General Harrison was a prudent commander and ran no unnecessary risks; the strictest vigilance was enjoined upon every one in the army. All the men slept on their arms.

At midnight Alec, George and Dennis were aroused and prepared to go on sentry duty at once.

"Where's Pierre?" inquired George, noticing that the trapper was gone.

"I don't know," said Alec in surprise. "He didn't have to go on duty, did he? I wonder where he's gone."

"We haven't time to find out now," said

George, "but you may be sure that whatever he's doing he's not wasting his time."

If the three friends had known what mission had taken Pierre away from the fire and his blankets they would have been far more interested than they were under the circumstances.

"Wind's gone down," observed Alec.

"Not a breath stirring," said George. "I never saw a more quiet night."

"I hope no Injins is stirrin', nayther," said Dennis solemnly.

They reported and were at once assigned to their posts. The night was calm and quiet, but over the camp there seemed to hang an air of suspense. Even though most of the men were asleep, a feeling of tenseness permeated the very air. "The calm before the storm," thought George to himself.

He walked slowly up and down his beat, gazing intently out across the prairie. A pale moon was setting in the sky and the faint flicker of the stars afforded the only light he had. Behind him glowed the watchfires, and as George thought of all those men he was guarding, his heart swelled with pride at the responsibility.

Perhaps the safety of the whole camp depended on him alone.

Everything breathed of quietness and peace. Not a sound interrupted the stillness of the night. Dawn was not far distant, and with its coming George knew that all immediate danger would be past. He also knew that the time just before dawn was the most dangerous of all; then it was that the Indians were accustomed to launch their attacks.

George stood on a small eminence and gazed out across the prairie. It was a little after four o'clock in the morning and the young soldier remembered that it was November the seventh, his birthday. He hoped he should be able to spend it in peace and quiet. There were no clouds in the sky and the weather promised to be fair at any rate.

Suddenly he started. What was that he saw? Not a breath of wind was stirring, yet the tall grass was waving as if under the influence of a strong breeze. Nearer and nearer came the waves, while George watched spellbound. What could it all mean? How could the grass wave and sway when there was no breeze to blow it? Closer and closer moved the

disturbance in the grass until it reached a spot directly at the foot of the little elevation where George was standing.

"Who goes there?" he challenged.

There was no reply, and George was more puzzled than ever. Suddenly, however, with the quick instinct of a woodsman he stooped, and looking under the grass beheld an Indian stealthily creeping towards him. Instantly raising his rifle he fired.

CHAPTER XXV

TIPPECANOE

BEFORE the report of the rifle died away there was a tremendous yell. Clouds of savages sprang out of the tall grass and rushed upon the American lines.

"Indians! Indians!" shouted George at the top of his voice.

Almost instantly bugles sounded and the men seized their arms. General Harrison, knowing from experience what hour was the most dangerous, was already at his post. Every officer was prepared for action. All the watch-fires were immediately extinguished, so that the Indians might not be guided by them in making their attacks.

The left flank of the American army received the first onset. Here it was that the four friends, George, Alec, Dennis and Pierre were to be found when the battle opened. The first three named had been on sentry duty there;

and Pierre quickly joined them soon after the first shot was fired.

Greatly outnumbered and unable to rally before the furious and sudden assault they gave way.

"Back, Dennis! Back!" shouted Alec. "Don't be reckless."

"I hate t' retreat before the varmints!" cried Dennis doggedly.

"Well, you can't do any good if you're dead," Alec reminded him. "Be sensible for once in your life."

They dodged behind trees and logs, taking advantage of every available bit of protection to be found. Bullets sang around their heads, while the noise of the guns and the yells of the Indians added to the din and confusion.

"Here they come! Here they come!" shouted Alec.

"They're charging," cried George. "Hold 'em back."

On came the Indians, yelling fiercely and making a loud rattling noise with deer-hoofs held in their hands. In the faint light of early morning they had the appearance of hundreds

of flitting ghosts as they crept from tree to tree and dashed swiftly across the open spaces.

"Fire!" came the order.

Scores of rifles spoke and more than one savage pitched forward on his face to move no more. Still they advanced. Their bravery and reckless disregard of life were amazing.

"We must give way a little more, men," said Major White. "We mustn't let them cut us off. Hold them as well as you can until reënforcements can be sent up."

Fighting desperately the Americans retreated slowly. They were outnumbered on this quarter and not to withdraw would have been suicide.

"Why don't they send us help?" complained Alec.

"Zey will as soon as eet iss possible, no doubt," said Pierre quietly. He was losing no time in words. Loading and reloading his gun as quickly as possible he discharged it at their redskinned foes. Woe unto any Indian who showed himself where Pierre's rifle was pointing.

Several Americans lay stark and still on the

battlefield, their comrades unable to bring their bodies back.

"Poor old McLeod lies out there," said George.

"Yis, an' look at that divil creepin' up on him now," cried Dennis. "He's after a scalp, the snake!"

"Shoot him then, shoot him!" exclaimed George. "My gun is empty."

"An' so is mine."

"Yell to Pierre, or somebody. We mustn't let him be scalped."

Pierre, however, was some distance away. George and Dennis lay crouched behind a fallen log many yards distant from their nearest comrade. They called out to some one to prevent the outrage, but their words were lost in the noise and shock of battle.

"Load, Dennis, quick!" urged George, trying desperately to do the same.

"He'll reach there first," exclaimed Dennis.

Suddenly the young Irishman leaped to his feet. "Not before me though," he cried. Before George realized what was happening Dennis sprang over the log which sheltered them and dashed forward. He swung his

clubbed rifle around his head and yelled at the top of his lungs.

"Come back! Come back!" shouted George. "You'll be killed sure."

Dennis heard nothing. Shouting and whirling his rifle he rushed across the bullet-swept battlefield. Fascinated and almost too amazed to move George watched his friend's progress. It seemed a miracle that he was not shot down. Nearer and nearer he came to his foe.

The Indian, creeping towards McLeod's body, saw Dennis approaching and hesitated. Except for a long knife the redskin was unarmed. He rose halfway to his feet and in a crouching attitude waited for the young Irishman. Dennis was almost upon him now.

All at once, as Dennis held his gun aloft it was torn from his grasp. A bullet intended for the young soldier struck the butt of his rifle and wrenched it from his hands.

"He's gone now," moaned George. "Even if a bullet doesn't get him."

With an exultant cry the Indian rose to his full height and with knife upraised rushed at Dennis. Dennis had paused momentarily,

stunned by the sudden loss of his weapon. He was powerless to defend himself. He had no time to pick up his rifle, and his foe was upon him. His plight was indeed desperate. George felt as though he could not look at what was to come.

The Indian's keen blade never found its mark, however. As the savage stood with raised right arm, ready to plunge the long knife into the heart of his enemy, he seemed to hesitate. His knees wobbled slightly and the knife fell from his hands. Slowly he sank to his knees and then tumbled forward in a limp heap.

"You got him! You got him!" cried a voice at George's ear, and turning he spied Alec and Pierre.

"Did you see that?" demanded Alec excitedly.

"Did you shoot that Indian, Pierre?" said George.

"He certainly did," exclaimed Alec. "What a shot that was!"

"You saved his life," said George simply.

"Not unless he help heemself," returned Pierre. "He must get out of zere."

Dennis had recovered his wits somewhat, however. He dodged behind a tree and pressed close to the trunk so as to present as small a target to his foes as possible. Bullets clipped the bark off close about him, however, showing that the savages had not forgotten him.

"We must get him away from there," exclaimed Alec. "He'll be killed, and it's only a question of time."

Suddenly there was a shout.

"There's General Harrison!" shouted Alec. "And reënforcements, too!"

Several companies of infantry were seen approaching. A loud cheer greeted them, and as they came near the whole force rose to their feet and charged forward. Fearlessly these frontiersmen advanced, driving the Indians from thicket and bush, killing those who resisted and taking some prisoners. Many a brave American fell upon the field, but the others kept on.

Soon all the ground lost had been regained. The Indians were driven from the wooded section, back into the high grass. Their attacks did not cease for that reason, however.

Alternately they rushed upon the American lines and retreated. They fought desperately and seemed determined to win the fight or die in the attempt. So fast and so often did the Indians attack that many times the Americans had no chance to reload their rifles before the savages were upon them. They rushed straight up to the bayonets of the troops, striking at them with their tomahawks and war clubs.

"Nivir retreat!" exclaimed Dennis, lunging at a big redskin who had rushed upon him. With the arrival of reënforcements he had recovered his gun.

"Right you are," cried Alec as with a mighty blow he smote the Indian squarely on the top of the head with the butt of his gun.

"One less to bother us," said Dennis, as their enemy fell. "Who's next?"

"The sun is next," cried George. "It's growing light."

Shoulder to shoulder the four friends fought. Time and again as the Indians charged they shot them down. Pierre's rifle did deadly execution, nor were his three companions far behind.

"General Harrison is killed," shouted some one.

"What!" cried George. "It can't be."

"He's shot," said the man, and the news spread like wildfire. Panic seized some of the weaker men and they threatened to become demoralized. Only the encouragement and threats of their fellows prevented them from bolting. General Harrison was such a splendid leader. What could the army do without him?

"Is it true?" demanded George dazedly.

"Eet may be but a rumor," said Pierre encouragingly. "At any rate we must fight all ze harder if eet iss."

Suddenly there was a cheer. Making his way through the lines was General Harrison himself. He had come to prove that he was very much alive.

"A bullet cut through his hair," said one of the men.

"That's how it was rumored that he was killed, I suppose," remarked George. "All I can say is, thank heaven it is not true."

A charge was ordered. The troops sprang from their shelters and pushed forward against

the Indians. Day had now come, so that it was possible to see clearly just what was taking place.

"Drive 'em into the swamps!" shouted Alec fiercely as they started on the run across the battlefield. "Chase 'em back into the woods."

Suddenly he stumbled and sank to his knees.

"I'm shot," he said weakly. "Leave me here and go ahead."

His three friends stopped at once, however, and leaned over him.

"Where are you hit, Alec?" demanded George anxiously.

"Here, in the shoulder," was the faint reply. He lifted his hand with an effort and strove to place it on his shoulder blade.

"Look," cried Dennis excitedly, "he's hit in th' back."

"He certainly is!" exclaimed George. "How could he be shot in the back, when there are only our own men behind us?"

The three friends looked at one another inquiringly.

CHAPTER XXVI

A MYSTERY SOLVED

IN front of them were the American troops, pursuing the Indians relentlessly, driving them into the woods and swamps as Alec had wished. Behind them were a few of the wounded and those who had been outstripped in the mad assault.

"It's sortinly queer," exclaimed Dennis.

"It is," George agreed heartily.

Pierre, however, made no comment. He was busily engaged in binding up Alec's wound as best he could. Pondering deeply over the matter George and Dennis sat in silence.

Presently Pierre rose to his feet. "Come," he urged. "Alec iss all right. Let us go; we have work to do."

"We're with ye," cried Dennis. "Come ahead."

"We go zis way," announced Pierre quietly. He started to walk in the opposite direction

from the one the charge was taking. Farther and farther away sounded the noise of battle, as the Americans drove the Indians before them. They attacked fiercely on all sides, and before their onslaught the savages broke and fled.

"What for?" demanded George in amazement.

"Are ye crazy?" exclaimed Dennis in astonishment. "You're not goin' t' leave th' fight now, are ye?"

"None of the enemy are in that direction, Pierre," cried George.

"Yes zey are," said Pierre quietly.

"I'll wager ye there's not a single Injin in th' direction ye want t' take us," said Dennis warmly. "Ye're losin' yer mind."

"Perhaps zere are not Indians zere," said Pierre. "Ze enemy iss zere, however, an' we must hurry."

George and Dennis looked at each other helplessly. They were both firmly of the opinion that Pierre had suddenly gone insane. Otherwise why should he wish to go in exactly the opposite direction from the one which would lead to the fighting.

"Do you wish to get ze man who shoot Alec?" asked Pierre.

The two young soldiers stared at him in amazement, the same idea flashing through their minds.

"Sortinly we do," cried Dennis eagerly.

"Zen come wiz me."

"Who do you think did it?" queried George eagerly.

"Do you not know?"

"Burch?"

"Zat iss ze snake. We will fix heem zis time," and Pierre's jaws closed with a snap. "Shoot heem at sight."

"How do you know he shot Alec?" demanded George.

"How do I know ze sun rise? I just know eet."

"Where do ye expect t' find him?" asked Dennis.

"We spread out here," said Pierre. "I stay in ze middle, you, George, take ze right, and Dennis ze left."

"How far apart shall we keep?" George inquired.

"About feefty yards. Zen go ahead slow."

"Do ye think we should lave th' fight like this?" queried Dennis dubiously. "P'raps we should stay with th' others."

"Come wiz me," directed Pierre. "We do more good if we kill zis snake zan if we stay wiz ze army."

They separated to take their allotted places, the parting word from Pierre being to shoot Burch on sight. George did not relish this prospect, however. Aside from a personal dislike and many half-formed suspicions he knew of no reason why he should strive to kill this man. He knew Pierre, however, and was certain that the French trapper would never have said such a thing without good reason.

The sounds from the battlefield came to his ears less and less distinctly now. He hoped that all was going well with the Americans.

Suddenly he heard the crack of a rifle and saw Dennis drop to one knee. A hundred yards distant through the trees, he saw the young Irishman strive to rise to his feet and sink back again weakly. He dodged behind a tree and looked around for Pierre. Presently he discovered the trapper also taking refuge behind a large oak.

George peered out from his hiding-place. A little cloud of smoke floated lazily on the still air, just above a small clump of bushes some three hundred feet distant. No sign of life appeared, however. What ought he to do, George wondered. He was not long deciding, however.

Raising his rifle he took aim at the center of the clump of bushes and fired. He thought perhaps that if any one was hiding in that spot the bullet would drive him out, and then Pierre could do the rest. As he planned, so it happened. Straining his eyes to learn the results of his shot he saw a man emerge from the thicket and start to steal away.

Instantly Pierre's rifle cracked. Evidently he also had seen the man. George knew that given any sort of target, the Frenchman never missed. So great was his confidence in his friend's ability that he sprang out from his hiding-place and dashed boldly across the intervening space. As he did so he saw the man that had been fired at stumble; he staggered a few steps and then pitched forward on his face, his rifle flying from his grasp into the nearby bushes.

Before many seconds had elapsed George

was upon him. He had recognized Burch as he approached and without hesitating an instant hurled himself upon the prostrate body of his enemy. Burch had been wounded in the leg by Pierre's bullet, but he struggled desperately. Over and over on the ground the fighters rolled, first one having the advantage and then the other.

Their breath came hard and fast. They pommeled and pounded each other, struggling desperately. Burch was bigger and heavier than George and for a time it seemed as if it might go hard with the young soldier. Before many moments had elapsed, however, Pierre arrived upon the scene. He danced around the two struggling men, waiting eagerly for a chance to strike a blow that would free George from his adversary.

So confused and entwined were the legs and arms and bodies of the fighters, however, that Pierre feared to strike lest he should harm his comrade. At length an opportunity presented itself and he struck. A sharp blow on the head stunned Burch; his limbs relaxed and George shook himself free, and rose to his feet.

"He's a tough customer, Pierre," he panted.

"Truly he iss," agreed Pierre. "I was afraid he hurt you."

"He couldn't have been wounded very badly."

"In ze ankle," said Pierre, pointing to a red blotch of blood on Burch's trouser leg. "He not hurt much."

"He's pretty lively, I can vouch for that," said George, breathing hard. "What do you plan to do with him?"

"I tie heem first," Pierre exclaimed. He loosed his prisoner's belt and quickly slipped it around his arms and body. Then with his own belt he bound his captive's legs.

"We search heem now," said Pierre. He thrust his hand inside of Burch's coat and drew out a package of papers. At that moment the wounded man opened his eyes and looked about him. He tried to move but could not.

"What does this mean?" he demanded angrily. "Let me up."

"What does *zis* mean?" asked Pierre, holding up the package for his prisoner to see.

"Give me those letters," cried Burch. "They're mine!"

"Zey are mine now," Pierre corrected.

"They are personal letters," pleaded Burch. "Please give them to me."

"Don't ye do it," said a familiar voice. Standing behind George and Pierre was Dennis. His face was drawn with pain and he leaned heavily on the stock of his gun. "That's the fellow who shot me," he exclaimed.

"Why were you after me?" demanded Burch.

"Because you shoot Alec, zat iss why," said Pierre sharply. "Zat iss not ze only reason zough."

"I did not shoot Alec," Burch protested stoutly.

"Zen we come after you, because of ze ozzer reason," said Pierre.

"What do you mean?"

"We want zese letters."

"Those are my personal letters, I tell you," Burch fairly screamed. "I call this an outrage. General Harrison shall hear of this."

"And very soon too," said Pierre quietly. "Zat iss where we are going to take you and ze letters."

Burch struggled like a madman to loose his bonds. He raved and swore and fought; his

face grew fiery red and his eyes bulged. He tried to bite at the belt which held him, and when he could not reach it, he swore afresh. He rolled over and over on the ground, utterly regardless of his wound. Finally he stopped from sheer exhaustion and lay still.

"Now we take heem," announced Pierre. "I take ze feet, George, and you take ze head."

"Can you walk all right, Dennis?" asked George.

"I c'n walk, but not all right. Go ahead though, an' I'll follow ye."

They started back towards camp, carrying Burch between them, while Dennis hobbled along behind; coming to General Harrison's headquarters they deposited their burden upon the ground in front of his tent. The general was not there, being absent in the field directing his troops, for the battle still raged. Major White was there, however.

"Suppose zat you go an' look after Alec an' Dennis," said Pierre. "Zey may need help."

"All right," said George, but he left reluctantly, for he was eager to learn what it was that Pierre intended to say to Major White.

CHAPTER XXVII

A VOLLEY OF SHOTS

GEORGE had no trouble in finding his two wounded comrades. Fortunately neither one of them was badly injured and when George had ministered to their needs they were able to make their way back to camp.

"I'm off for the fight," announced George.

"I wish I could go with ye," moaned Dennis sadly.

"You stay where you are," exclaimed George. "Pierre will be along here presently and besides the fight must be almost over. I don't hear much firing any more."

He started off at a brisk pace through the woods. On the way he passed many bodies, both of Indians and white men, lying stark and still upon the battlefield. Men who were wounded painfully made their way back to camp. Here and there lay a figure, its scalp torn from its head and George shuddered at the sight.

When he had covered a half mile or so he saw a body of troops making its way towards him. He recognized men of his own company and soon hailed them.

"The fight's over," announced one of the men.

"Yes," said another, "the Indians have disappeared into the swamps and into the woods. We chased 'em in, but they're too good for us in places like that and they got away."

"How about Tippecanoe?" inquired George.

"The village is abandoned."

"So the fight's all over, is it?" exclaimed George. "Well, I guess I'll go and have a look at Tippecanoe anyway."

"I'll go with you," exclaimed a young man named Henry Parker. He was almost the same age as George, and the two boys were fast friends.

"Did you hear about the Prophet?" inquired Henry, when they had started on their way to Tippecanoe.

"No, I didn't," said George. "What about him?"

"Why, all through the battle he was sitting on that hill over there singing a war song. He

had told his men, you know, that the Great Spirit had made the bullets of our men useless and that they wouldn't hurt the Indians at all. He also said that they would have light so that they could see, while the Americans would be in thick darkness."

"His men didn't believe anything so ridiculous as that, did they?" demanded George in consternation.

"Yes, they did. When the Indians began to fall they went to the Prophet and told him, but he said not to worry and to keep on fighting for his predictions would soon come true."

"They fought hard, all right," exclaimed George.

"They certainly did," agreed Henry, "and I think the main reason was because that rascal Ellskwatawa told them all he did. These Indians believe almost anything their medicine men tell them, you know."

"Tecumseh wouldn't have been so silly."

"I guess that's right."

"Where is he now?"

"Still down South, I think," said Henry. "As soon as he hears of this he'll be back fast enough, though."

"This defeat will spoil a lot of his plans, I guess."

"I hope so. It's better to fight eight hundred Indians this year than it would be to wait until next when Tecumseh might have collected perhaps a couple of thousand."

Presently they came to the village of Tippecanoe. Not an Indian was to be seen, and the redmen had apparently left in great haste, for many of their possessions had been abandoned. The American troops wandered about at will, inspecting the tepees and their contents with much interest.

"No Indians here at all?" asked George of one of the soldiers.

"Not one, except an old chief who had a broken leg and couldn't get away," replied the man.

"I hear Captain Snelling took a chief prisoner."

"He did; with his own hands."

"Who was he?"

"I don't know, but I guess he wasn't very proud of some of his leaders. When he was captured he kept saying, 'Good man, me no Shawnee.'"

"Tecumseh and his brother the Prophet are Shawnees, aren't they?"

"Yes, and I guess this fellow didn't want to be mixed up with them."

"That's funny," laughed George. "I suppose the Prophet escaped."

"Don't worry about him," said the soldier. "He wouldn't get near enough to the fight to be in any danger."

"Let's go back to camp, George," said Henry. "I want to see my brother and find out if he's all right."

"I want to go back, too," said George. They said good-by to the man who had answered their questions and began to retrace their steps. Apparently the victory had been complete.

Presently the two young soldiers arrived at camp, when Henry went in search of his brother and George rejoined his three friends, Alec, Dennis and Pierre.

"The Indians have abandoned Tippecanoe," he announced.

"Good," exclaimed Alec. "It cost us a lot of men though."

"How many?"

"Well, I hear we had about fifty killed and a hundred wounded."

"How many did the Indians lose?"

"About the same number, I hear."

"How is your wound and how is Dennis'?" asked George.

"We'll be all right."

"An' besides we have th' distinction o' bein' th' only wans t' be wounded by a white man," said Dennis.

"By the way," exclaimed George, turning to Pierre, "what about Burch?"

"Did you not hear?" inquired Pierre mildly.

"Not a word."

"Burch was a spy," Alec exclaimed. "Those papers that Pierre found on him contained all information about our army, details of our plans, and letters showing how he had worked to stir up the Indians against us."

"A spy?" said George slowly. "Are you sure?"

"Zere iss no doubt," said Pierre. "I suppected heem all along."

"Then why didn't you tell us?"

"I wish to make sure."

"When he made those smoke rings, he was signaling to the Indians, I suppose."

"Yes, and it was he that tried to stampede our horses that night," said Alec. "They proved that too."

"Is that so?" exclaimed George. "Who was he working for? Surely not for Tecumseh?"

"Who is our greatest enemy just now?" asked Alec.

"What country, do you mean?"

"Yes. Whom did we win our freedom from?"

"England. Was he working for them?"

"He was. You know Canada isn't very far away and there are lots of British troops up there. England doesn't like to see us spreading out and getting more and more territory."

"So Burch was sent to stir up trouble for us and to spy on us, was he?" said George.

"He was," said Dennis. "He'll not trouble us ag'in, though."

"Why not?"

"Because," said Pierre, "at twelve o'clock he iss to be shot. He was courtmartialed and found guilty in feefteen minutes." He looked

at his watch. "Eet iss just twelve o'clock now," he said.

Suddenly there came to the ears of the four friends the sound of a volley of shots, and then all was still.

"I guess that will be all f'r Mister Burch," remarked Dennis grimly.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONCLUSION

THE defeat at Tippecanoe was a heavy blow to Tecumseh's plans and for a time broke up the Indian confederacy. He was unable to raise any considerable force against the Americans until the commencement of the War of 1812.

On his return from the South, finding that the force at Tippecanoe had dispersed and that his brother had fled, he proceeded to the American post of Fort Wayne. He still retained the same haughty spirit and did not give up his idea of uniting the various tribes against the Americans. By threats and insolent language he attempted to obtain ammunition from the commander of the fort; but upon being refused he said he would go to his British father, who would not deny him.

Before the war with Great Britain actually broke out, Tecumseh already was committing depredations along the frontiers of Indiana,

Illinois and Ohio. These attacks were made early in the spring of 1812, and when the war started he joined the British army, receiving from the Redcoats a commission as brigadier-general. With a large body of warriors he joined the army of General Proctor when his old enemy, General Harrison, took the field in the autumn of 1813.

General Proctor with a strong force occupied Malden, on the Detroit River. Here he had determined to await the attack of General Harrison, but the victory of the Americans on Lake Erie made him decide to burn Malden and retreat into the interior.

Tecumseh did not approve of this decision of the British commander and opposed it bitterly. His remonstrance had no effect, however; General Proctor set fire to Malden and hastily retreated. Tecumseh, although he had over two thousand Indians under his command, also was obliged to retreat in company with the British.

General Harrison crossed the river and advanced rapidly in pursuit, overtaking the retreating army at the Moravian towns on the river Thames. On the 5th of October, 1813,

the battle there took place. Each side numbered about twenty-five hundred men. The British were posted in an advantageous position, their flanks protected by the river and a swamp. Tecumseh with his entire force of Indians was stationed on the left.

The Indians fought desperately, and, as they were charged by the Americans, reserved their fire with great coolness until the attacking columns were but a few paces from their lines. Then they poured upon them so destructive a volley that the front ranks were nearly all cut down. Tecumseh throughout the battle was foremost among his men, urging them on by his voice and example.

Colonel Johnson, who led the American mounted infantry against the Indians, ordered his men to dismount and form in line. A fierce and bloody struggle ensued. Tecumseh was shot dead; the Indians unable to withstand the charge of the Americans gave way and fled into the swamp where they were dispersed. The British right wing previously had been routed and the victory was complete; more than six hundred prisoners were captured.

This defeat and the death of Tecumseh, who

was the life and soul of the Indian confederacy, completely broke the spirit of the savages. Seven of the hostile tribes immediately sued for peace and gave hostages to guarantee their good behavior.

Thus ended the career of Tecumseh, probably the most able military chief of all the northern tribes. He possessed wisdom, foresight, self-control, bravery and a wonderful mind. He was far superior to the British leader under whom he fought; he had more courage, more humanity, more firmness, and understood better the art of war. In appearance he was tall and muscular, with a dignified carriage and a piercing eye; he was stern, and usually quiet, though when need arose he could speak with great fluency and eloquence.

His humanity deserves to be noticed. He had promised General Harrison that he would do all in his power to prevent cruelty to prisoners. On one occasion Tecumseh, perceiving a number of American prisoners about to be tomahawked, while the British officers quietly looked on, rushed in among them, flourished his sword, and called upon the sav-

ages to desist. "It is a disgrace to kill a defenseless prisoner!" he cried.

Tecumseh left a son, who was fighting by his side when he was slain. The Prince Regent of England made this son a present of a handsome sword as a token of respect for the memory of his father. In 1826 he emigrated west of the Mississippi. Ellskwatawa, after the termination of the war, lived in Canada, and received a pension from the British government. When his nephew went west the Prophet accompanied him.

THE END

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